

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

NAG

PC

PLAYSTATION

WE DIG THROUGH
THE MAGGOT
LADEN MEAT, HAIR AND BONES
FOR A FEW
TASTY MORSELS

HARDCORE
HARDWARE MUST-HAVES!

GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9:
GREATEST MOTHERBOARD EVER MADE

GEFORCE GTX480:
FASTEST GPU MONEY CAN BUY

HOT
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COMPETITION

ONE-OF-A-KIND
ASUS NOTEBOOK

+
THE COLLECTOR'S EDITION

DEAD RISING 2

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RED DEAD REDEMPTION

BLUE

SPLIT/SECOND: VELOCITY

UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2010

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

TEST DRIVE
UNLIMITED

FOR SPEED WORLD

PRINCE OF PERSIA:
THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

We're really sorry if your DVD is missing this month, but we made it out of brains, and the zombies got it. Okay, okay, sorry for the lame joke, but lame is all you're going to get if you keep reading tiny bits of text out in the open like this.



VOL 13 ISSUE 4 07.2010 SOUTH AFRICA R42.00





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- * Memory Clock : 1674MHz (DDR 3348MHz)
- * Processor Clock : 1215MHz
- * Video Support : Dual link DVI / Mini HDMI



GeForce® GTX 480 (1536MB GDDR5)

- * Process Technology : 40nm
- * Processor Cores : 480
- * Memory Amount : 1536MB
- * Memory Interface : 384bit
- * DRAM Type : GDDR5
- * Graphics Clock : 700MHz
- * Memory Clock : 1848MHz (DDR 3696MHz)
- * Processor Clock : 1401MHz
- * Video Support : Dual link DVI / Mini HDMI



GF210

1 GB DDR2 128BIT



- * Process Technology: 40nm
- * Processor Cores: 24 cores
- * Memory Amount: 1024MB
- * Memory Interface: 128bit
- * DRAM Type: DDR2
- * Graphics Clock: 475MHz
- * Memory Clock: 800MHz (400x2)
- * Processor Clock: 1100MHz
- * Memory Bandwidth: 12.8 GB/sec

GT220

1 GB DDR3 128BIT



- * Process Technology: 40nm
- * Processor Cores: 48 cores
- * Memory Amount: 1024MB
- * Memory Interface: 128bit
- * DRAM Type: DDR3
- * Graphics Clock: 635MHz
- * Memory Clock: 1580MHz (790x2)
- * Processor Clock: 1381MHz
- * Memory Bandwidth: 25.28 GB/sec

GT240 SONIC

1 GB GDDR5 128BIT



- * Process Technology: 40nm
- * Processor Cores: 96 cores
- * Memory Amount: 1024MB
- * Memory Interface: 128bit
- * DRAM Type: GDDR5
- * Graphics Clock: 585MHz
- * Memory Clock: 3780MHz (1890x2)
- * Processor Clock: 1420MHz
- * Memory Bandwidth: 60.48 GB/sec

GTS250 E-GREEN

1 GB GDDR3 256BIT



- * Process Technology: 55nm
- * Processor Cores: 128 cores
- * Memory Amount: 1024MB
- * Memory Interface: 256bit
- * DRAM Type: GDDR3
- * Graphics Clock: 675MHz
- * Memory Clock: 1800MHz (900x2)
- * Processor Clock: 1458MHz
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- * 10 laptop tips



H001

- * Transparent acrylic side-panel
- * Piano varnished front panel
- * DIY-inspired 80mm coloured fan
- * Front panel access ports
- * HDD bay features anti-shock design



H403

- * Intel TAC2.0 vent design
- * Supports water-cooled radiator
- * 12cm (LED) fan for lower noise
- * Mesh design front panel
- * Tool-free installation

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- 26 **Dead Rising 2**
Just shoot them in the head! They seem to go down permanently if you shoot them in the head. Then, you gotta burn them! Miktar Dracon and Dane Remendes go all co-op and stuff to take on the zombie apocalypse. The last thing they did before the zombies ate their brains was send us this Dead Rising 2 feature. R.I.P.

80 **Ultimate Showdown: ASUS vs. GIGABYTE**

Resident mad scientist Neo Sibeko drank a flask of liquid nitrogen once. Even with the mild brain freeze, he still found the time to put two fantastic motherboards up against one another in a straight-up deathmatch just to see which one came out alive. ASUS Crosshair IV Formula vs. GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7. Ready? Fight!

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Championship | Split/Second

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Soundtrack | [Rodain's Stuff]:
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Database v1.16c.exe | the
BiT.PDF | Unicorn surprise
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Runtime Environment v6.20
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<101 GAME VIDEOS>

Including 3 ScrewAttack Videos
1 retrospective video
6 GameState videos

A mom brings her kid to the doctor with five toy horses up his bum...

...the doctor says he's in a stable condition

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Plan your life from here

The word 'July' on the cover should tell you that we're now officially done with the beginning of 2010. This is how the rest of the year is going to play out for NAG and whatever else we're involved in.

THE NEXT ISSUE (AUGUST) is going to feature our E3 supplement (32-48 pages), covering all the exciting newness that E3 brings each year. The DVD will be crammed full of trailers from E3 as well as the huge and impressive *Mass Effect 2* demo (at just over 2GB of space fairing fun). Inside the actual magazine we'll be doing a few E3 hands-on previews – this is stuff Miktar was invited to see or forced his way into in Los Angeles. I also know of a few other inserts that'll make the magazine bag a big fat one.

The **September** issue will be a cracker with more of our outstanding E3 previews finding their way in there and I guess our *StarCraft II* review will be in there too. Not sure what else, but there are rumours of a big game on the cover that I can't talk about yet.)

October is a big one. We're going to be reporting back on the Games Convention in Germany and it will have its own supplement too. The October issue will also be on sale at rAge 2010! We're expecting good things at this year's rAge. After last year's less than exciting showing from the whole industry worldwide, thanks to the recession, many companies are bringing it full force this year, making it one to remember. We have a number of unconfirmed exclusives for the show and more overseas developers coming than ever before.

Then, don't forget about the **NAG LAN**. Tickets go on sale on 1 August 2010 (Sunday) and last year sold out in 2.5 days – if you want a ticket you must get there on the day they go on sale. The price has gone up to **R300** per head because we have to put in some new fibre optic networking kit. We will have Internet connectivity in the LAN for any online activation but not for downloading illegal stuff. We're also giving everyone in the LAN a voucher and other cool stuff.

The mighty **November** issue is when the big games all drop and many of the new ones for 2011 are unveiled and previewed. This issue can go huge or large – just depends on what the industry is doing. November is also when all those big games come out like *Call of Duty* and *Medal of Honor*.

Then there's **December** and **January** (January because we put that issue together in December), by now everything is already out and we'll be spoilt for choice again for December and the crazy Christmas buying

madness. These two months are when all the huge reviews for the festive season appear. It's all downhill from here folks, so hold on and enjoy the ride.

SECOND DVD

We haven't forgotten about the second DVD vote and that whole circus. Here's the deal. When I put that vote to the test it was during a particularly busy few months (in terms of data) and we were running out of space each month without fail. The results are positive for a second DVD but there just hasn't been a consistent stretch of amazing content on the Internet. I really just want the second DVD to be something special and worth the extra money instead of just another 9 gigabytes of average stuff. Hang in there, and when we have something really amazing we'll let you know.

FNB WINNER

Well done to Regan Waverley. He (and partner) will be accompanying NAG to Germany for a little glamorous international gaming convention action – that's right, we're just like rock stars in some circles. Huge thanks to FNB for this cool promotion and we hope to see them involved in something similar next year for E3... hint, hint. :)

COVER STORY

Well, this was a tense situation a few weeks ago – no cover story to speak of. I blame E3; everyone scampers off to Los Angeles after the next big thing leaving us with unanswered phone calls and ignored electronic mail. So, no thanks to Capcom we managed to pull it all off by ourselves. Fortunately for us Miktar was in the States and played the game and managed to write the article after a convention day (no small feat). We had Dane fill in all the other important bits and during the last two days of our deadline pulled it out of the bag. Options we also looked at included *Singularity* (but Activision decided to keep this one away from us) and the other idea was to feature the shiny new Xbox on the cover, but can you imagine how the console haters would have bitched about that! Huge thanks to Miktar, Dane and Chris (our junior art director) for making it happen.

Michael James
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"Are gringos falling from the sky?"
"Yes, El Guapo."

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4X Speed via RAID 0

USB Power3x



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Letter of the Moment

From: Nick**Subject:** I just wanted to use the word paradigm

I HAVE BEEN SITTING HERE, before my computer, for about an hour, listening to I Got a Feeling, by the Black Eyed Peas over and over again, trying to think up some 'eclectic chicken scratch' with which I could win me some games. I am also contemplating the sudden deterioration of my grammar at the end of the previous sentence, but don't worry about that.

It just occurred to me to look up a definition for 'eclectic chicken scratch', as I think that if I actually do what the info says, I might have a better chance of winning and whipping all those hippies who think they can write chicken scratch better than me. Google gave me a definition of eclectic as 'made up of things from different sources', and it gave me a definition of 'chicken scratch' that had something to do with Dexter's Laboratory. This I will ignore, and accept the premise that 'chicken scratch' refers to what I am writing now. Based on this definition, this email will

be about information (which is a real word, not a typo – it means information that resides inside an afro). If you don't believe me, fudge you (am I allowed to swear? If not, please replace this with fudge). From several different sources – four, to be precise:

The first source is Wikipedia, the source of all sources. It tells me that John Lennon was a member of the Beatles.

The second source is tomato source – All-gold, in fact. It goes well with chips.

The third source is my ass. The location from which I pulled the following statement: The communist regime in Russia had a preference for dead things.

The fourth source I have forgotten but I will be sure to get back to you as soon as I remember.

You may be wondering about my subject line. If this is the case, please get the fudge (this too) out of my garden."

Even though your grammar, sentence construction, spelling and use of English could all use a little help, and it does come off a little crazy, it's a winner. It's original and the first time someone has done a little research into the deeper meaning of it all. This is the last time however that garbage will win this prize. Ed.

The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by Megarom. "The winner receives two games for coming up with the most inspired bit of wisdom or cleverness."

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Important: Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...

**From:** Cheslyn**Subject:** Finally!

"HI, I AM THE biggest fan of three things in my life, that's my daughter my PC and my monthly issue of NAG (I mean it). I felt I had to write this letter for the first time ever (I am ashamed to say) because growing up I only believed in one thing – PC gaming, and as years went by I would notice that console games are taking over. Back then when I opened my New Age Gaming magazine PC games ruled the majority of those pages! So this weekend I closed my eyes, took my last riches and bought an Xbox 360...

And whilst playing the 2 games I got with the Xbox (Gears of War and Halo 3) I realised just how awesome a console is. It's something I should have done a long, long time ago. Although this does not mean I will be forgetting about my PC! Certain games are still better to play on it I believe. I just want to say to all PC game lovers as myself, go get a console as well, you won't regret it!"

Superbly put – welcome to the world of multiplatform gaming. This presented a soap box opportunity so here goes. NAG is accused every so often of becoming a console magazine because we do a lot of reviews on consoles. It's all true – we do a lot of console reviews because there are a lot of console games and (thanks to those pirating losers) fewer and fewer PC games. This doesn't mean we don't do PC – in fact most of the writers at NAG are PC gamers first and console gamers second, and this is because we (like everyone that complains about this) all started out on PC. I still don't play FPS games on the console, but I did finish all the Halo games, and they were perfectly suited to that environment. The other thing people have

to start getting through their heads is that there is very little difference between PC games and console games these days so it makes absolutely no difference which platform the game is reviewed on. If we just removed the 'reviewed on' box nobody would know any different. This situation will start changing in a year or so as PC quality keeps improving and the current generation of consoles remains static (but then we'll start hearing about the Xbox 720 and PS4). The catch is, in the future there won't be many PC games anymore because the idiot morons that pirate all their games would have killed off the entire market (unless of course they're independent, MMO or Blizzard games). You see, it's like global warming, if nobody does their little bit to help, we're all going to be screwed one day. Now be sure to send your piracy arguments about strict/tough DRM, having no Internet connectivity in SA and games are too short and expensive anyway to moron. mail@blackhole.com. Ed.

From: Justin**Subject:** Sample

I NEED HELP. I GOT DOOM 3 and wanted to load it on my PC (with Windows 7). It installs fine but when I try playing it, it displays the icon on the start bar and the picture of the DOOM monster – then cuts out. Please help!"

If it's cutting out like that it could be a blocked fuel line or your injectors are dirty or you don't have a GFX card in your computer or it's a 486 laptop. You see, if you want people to help you, you need to help them by giving them some useful information – anything really. We also don't offer a support service here at NAG for everyone's gaming problems. Sorry, no

>>

Shorts [extracts of LOL from NAG reader letters]

Wrong e-mail address by
– J Davis

"Charge" I said to my squad of Zealots "Our lives to NAG and my life for Aiur!"
– Siemenon

I use to be a beach bar manager.
– Jan-Hendrik

Are you zombies alive?
– DarkAge

I'm aware that deadlines must be the bane of your existence.
– Garth

The NAG was a sacred book, and its words had great powers of enlightenment and healing.
– Dominic

There isn't really anything going on here except the street lights.
– Martin

Freedom!

Welcome comrades, this is a freedom magazine in the free country of South Africa. Therefore the following topics are banned from the letters page until we decide differently. We're tired of these oppressive and tiresome topics:

- Violence in children and gaming (including violins and children in gaming)
- This platform is better than that platform
- Gamers used to be nerds but now everyone is a gamer and it's cool to be a nerd gamer because everyone is a nerd or something.

time. :) If I were you I'd right click on the .EXE file and run it in compatibility mode for Windows XP or 95. You can also try updating your drivers or ask people to help you on our forums: www.nag.co.za. Ed.

From: Alan**Subject:** Question

"WHY DOES YOUR MAGAZINE come on the last Thursday of the month?"

It's comes on the last Thursday of the month because that's conjugal visit day at magazine prison. But seriously, that's the day we picked for the magazine to go on sale a long time ago. We have to choose a specific on-shelf day so that we can work all our deadlines backwards from there or it would just be chaos. Ed.

From: G. Strydom**Subject:** Seriously

"HEY NAG! GREAT MAGAZINE, I've been an avid reader for around ten years now, it gives me something to look forward to each month (such things are becoming increasingly hard to find it seems). I approve of your inability to take anything seriously; the world is serious enough as it is. I regularly laugh out loud when paging through your magazine, some of the stuff in there are pretty random! I also like the way the Editor uses the inbox page as his own personal punching bag. There's nothing better to take the edge off than a healthy dose of written abuse. :) Anyway, I just wanted to share that with you guys. Keep it up!"

As you wish. Suck it, bum face... Ed.

From: Nicolas**Subject:** World of MMO

"I RECENTLY DISCOVER THE PREVIEWS

I and beta videos of APB (All Points Bulletin) and what amazed me was how real it looked. I then thought back to WoW (World of Warcraft). The first thought then came to me, can APB finally beat or be seen equal to the legend of MMO? I mean, we have had Aion, Age of Conan, etc. Now APB is rising, with Brink not too far behind. Can these games do what WoW has done for so many people? It is still confusing that a game can live on so long as WoW has. I wouldn't mind seeing APB up there, it looks awesome and fun. But time will tell us if EA has what it takes to be equal to Blizzard. Peace out NAG!"

I'm sure Electronic Arts shares your enthusiasm and I know they're hoping to capture some of the magic of World of Warcraft – those billions of dollars must be very enticing. The thing with APB – it

NAG Fan artwork

This is the best of what we received during the month. If you can insert, use or create a piece of gaming artwork incorporating the NAG logo you might also end up here for your three lines of fame.



Yaseen Brown: "[I] made this in Blender. It's a NAG sign in neon lights. I made 2 one in SD and the other in what blender calls 720p HD. Keep up the good work."

isn't a 'fantasy' game so we're going to have to wait and see... That all said, I do believe the GTA MMO hybrid pitch is the best chance anyone has of taking down the king of the castle. Just FYI, Brink isn't exactly that kind of a game. Ed.

From: Aaron

Subject: Ed you son of a <deleted>.

"EVERY TIME I READ the (awesome) NAG, you always crap on the people who send in letters! Seriously! Why are you such a son of a <deleted>! Now if you crap on me because of my letter I will walk into your office and do something destructive to you! I swear I will!"

Seek therapy. Ed.

From: Andre

Subject: Plants are your weapons

"DEAR NAG, (NICE AWESOME Gamers) I am writing this letter with extreme joy in my heart. To be completely frank, I am a hardcore gamer. Ever since I was young, I've lived in an alternate reality. My friends and I always pretended we were Dirty Harry, Walker Texas Ranger, and there was a phase when I believed that I was HULK. These strange fantasies I had, was then portrayed in the form of the PlayStation 1. The first I heard of it, I was merely intrigued. Then, when I found out the prices, advantages and pure awesomeness, I had to have it. When I asked my father if I could have it for my birthday, he simply scowled. Months later, the PlayStation 2 arrived. When I saved up enough money, I did not only buy a product of SONY, but a door to pure military grade awesomeness. Since then I only played RPG, shooting and occasionally racing games. I do not like change, and never bought any other genre. This went on for years..."

Then, I read your review on a game called Plants vs. Zombies. I thought, "How the hell could plants possibly compete against the mighty force that is the undead?!" I thought that the producer of the game (and the reviewer, for giving it a 96% rating) must either be drunk, or stoned, or just stark-raving bonkers. Then, when visiting my buddies, I saw a very peculiar desktop item - Plants vs. Zombies. So then I thought "what the hell", and gave it a shot. Simply put: THIS GIFT FROM ZEUS ITSELF WAS THE BEST, MOST ADDICTIVE, YET SIMPLE GAME THAT

I HAVE EVER PLAYED. IN MY LIFE. EVER. I cannot stress enough how much I enjoyed it. This showed me that change can be a good thing, but most of all, it showed me that NAG is never wrong. 96% is very fitting for this masterpiece, and I am truly sorry that I misjudged you guys, ahem, I mean you geniuses."

That's right buddy boy, and don't you forget it. I also suggest you talk to a therapist - some of the stuff at the beginning of your mail had me reaching for my teddy bear. Ed.

From: Eben

Subject: Religion in games and movies

"ALMOST EVERY GAME OR movie you can think of contains some sort of religion [not really, but I'll give you the point, Ed]. But the problem here is that they almost always get it wrong. They always get something wrong about the religion and then people get offended. Even some "Christian" movies that are supposed to encourage people totally mess up the real doctrine of Christianity [Of course, you mean your particular interpretation, Ed]. I don't know too much about the other religions, but I'm sure they also get offended by movies and games that don't know a thing about their religion. Of course I'm not just going to complain, I do have a solution. Why not make movies and games without any religion or a religion that is nonexistent? Star Wars is a great example, you cannot get offended by it because the religion in the movie (the force), doesn't exist, or didn't until some idiots from Australia actually started the religion (That's their own problem). What I'm trying to say is, do not use religion in movies and games, if you really want to create your own religion. This way nobody can get offended, and you will sell more games and movies this way."

Pointless issues aside... The thing with people is that no matter what you do, someone will always complain about something. So I always say, don't be scared of saying the wrong thing - it's better than being too scared to say anything and people will just have to get over themselves. Ed.

From: Cecil

Subject: None given

"HI NAG. FIRST OFF guys, awesome magazine, I've been an avid reader for about a year now and I find your reviews are always fair and your articles very informative. Your captions are hilarious, you guys are pretty diplomatic and balanced with regards to consoles/formats and I don't even know what Taryn van der Byl looks like but I've got a huge love Jones for her. In my books, any chic that's into gaming is hot by default."

Whoa! Hold back tiger. Try to imagine the love child of Satan and a leper Uruk-hai with a little Darth Vader involvement and you've got Taryn on a good day after a week of intensive spa treatments. In ancient Greece (she's that old) they used pictures of her to petrify and kill Medusa and if you did manage to get past all the horror and terror the person under all that can kill with a word. Stay away - she's ours. Ed. NAG

On the Forums

QUESTION: How highly do you value audio as part of your gaming experience?

OllieTheDog: The audio effects the game a heck of alot it can make the game your playing fell different in MW you will not hear happy little pop songs because that would effect the environment of the current game

CaViE: Depends on the game, but there are some games that just wouldn't have been as memorable and cinematic as they were, without their exceptional sound value. Think Dead Space. (See, them sounds gave you a chill there, didn't they?)

Azraphael: I have invested a lot of money in my audio system so I really like it when developers put some effort in to the audio design. For me games like Forza wouldn't be the same without the distinct audio signatures that each vehicle emits. Likewise, music can also make or break a game. Case in point - Mirrors Edge had the most awesome ambient sounds and tunes that just suited the feel and artistic direction of the game. I do not think the game would have worked with any other genre of music.

McDangerous: Audio plays just as big a part as graphics as far as immersion goes. Imagine not being able to hear the "ffoomp" of a tube being directed to an enemy's groin? Not hearing the swearing afterward would be just as disappointing!

nukehead: Well considering the fact that I can still 'hum' all the Mario theme songs... and Sonic for that matter. I would say that audio is as integrated into my conscious as much as graphics and playability. Also annoying audio is a big turn off...

Splash: I value it [full stop] It's not a question of how high I value it. Not hearing the guy walking about just around the corner is vitally important in any FPS, same as the banter in the load screen after a game of MW2. Also background music in many games creates the atmosphere which, just like in a movie, adds a lot to the gaming experience and immerses you into it.

GrimReaper: Picture Silent Hill or RE without the dramatic music as you search for that god forsaken key. Or when you try to evade that f**king super sighted guard on MGS. You have to think to yourself why you turn off the sound every time you hear something in the distance and shudder at the thought of what it might be. Hell ya audio is important it builds tension in a way that graphics and game play can't. Come on have you been emotional because of the graphics, apart from when you play uncharted2

NecroWolf: The way I see it, any EA game with EA trax can be judged by it's soundtrack because the quality of the soundtrack in them is usually indicative of the quality of the game. I also always find that when my favourite song comes on I always get super amped and gain super awesome concentration which leads to me winning that event e.g. an event on SSX or a race on NFS

echo: It can make or break a game. Sound effects puts life into your in-game actions and a soundtrack sets the mood. If graphics is the hotdog, sound would be the mustard. Or the ketchup. I'm not good with metaphors.

maxdamage: Depends on the game. Thats one of the reasons why I played Deus Ex way too many times. The ambiance, the background noises, music, etc....Made me feel like I was really in the game!

ZoRPA: It is an integral part of my gaming experience. Without it, games would be bland and you would not be able to relate to the scenarios in the game. How many of us even run Winamp in the background while playing games?

DigiBanks99: It is definitely a major irritation if it sucks, but you can always just turn of the music and play with only the SFX enabled and your own playlist running in the back.

Come share your pearls over a cup of wood rot on our forums:
<http://www.nag.co.za/forums/>

I, Gamer



by Miklós Szecsei

No dead end in Red Dead's end

I WANT TO TALK ABOUT the ending to Red Dead Redemption; consider that your last spoiler warning.

As far as game endings go, *Red Dead Redemption's* is a deviation from the norm, even by Rockstar's standards. Most games ramp the difficulty with subsequent missions until we face a final boss in a climactic scene. In Rockstar's latest epic, however, that climax is snatched away at the last second – twice.

Storming Dutch's mountain hide-out is an anticlimax as Dutch commits suicide rather than face justice. Marston returns home to his family but instead of the credits, we are given another set of missions to get the ranch running and to mend Marston's brittle relationship with his son Jack. While this all seems incredibly mundane when juxtaposed with the epic nature of Marston's previous encounters, it is exactly what he has wanted to achieve; the goal of our protagonist (and by extension the player) to return to his family has been

As far as game endings go, Red Dead Redemption's is a deviation from the norm, even by Rockstar's standards.

realised. It is so seldom that players are privy to what happens to characters once final bosses have been defeated. In *Red Dead Redemption*, however, we actively play a part in the epilogue, and it works beautifully.

Marston is able to save his wife and son, but he is unable to save himself. A second climactic scene is teased as Marston bravely steps out of the barn to face insurmountable odds alone. As the Deadeye automatically activates and the player desperately tries to paint too many targets, Marston's final moments are brought to a bloody and abrupt end by an unavoidable barrage of bullets. But again, Rockstar deftly sidesteps the anticlimax by pushing us forward a few years to a scene of Jack, standing at the grave of his parents. Rather than credits, we take control of Jack, which creates a phenomenal sense of having come full circle.

Two anticlimaxes and a series of mundane final missions, yet why does the ending still amaze me? Because John Marston had to die; it was the only way to ensure that his story lived up to the title's foreshadowing of Redemption. Playing as Jack switches the focus to revenge, and it is in the killing of Edgar Ross that the player is vindicated and the story of Marston's redemption is brought to a perfect ending.

Size does matter

Microsoft reveals the long-awaited revised Xbox 360

IT'S BEEN A LONG time coming; Microsoft has finally unveiled the new, smaller, sexier Xbox 360. This new version, which MS is officially calling the Xbox 360 250GB, comes with a ton of new features, the most obvious of which is the inclusion of an internal 250GB hard drive that attaches to the console in a similar way to the PS3's slot-loading approach.

The 250GB will also feature integrated 802.11n Wi-Fi, but the Ethernet port is still there for those who prefer a wired connection. Perhaps the biggest question on everyone's mind is "what about temperature and noise?" and while we're unable to give you a definite answer to the age-old Red Ring of Death issue, Microsoft has assured the world that the console is "whisper quiet." In a rather cheeky move, the new Xbox doesn't have red LEDs, so at least you're guaranteed not to experience a RRoD in the strictest sense. While exact dimensions aren't available at this time, the unit looks to be at least 20% smaller, with most of the size reduction coming off the top with the unit in its vertical position. Depth and width look to be about on par with the original Xbox 360, but thankfully the power brick has been reduced to something smaller than a double garage.

The inputs and outputs have been given a bit of an overhaul as well. There are now five USB ports as opposed to the previous three, as well as a specialised Kinect port at the rear of the unit that will allow the motion-sensing extension to be used without the need for additional power. The wireless controller will remain almost identical to previous generations (although we'd love to see the d-pad receive an upgrade), with only a slight visual makeover with a few splashes of glossy black and chrome and, of course, a black colour-scheme.

The Xbox 360 250GB will be 100% backwards-compatible with all previous games and you can use either the hard drive transfer kit or a USB flash drive to move your data from your current Xbox 360. The only feature that the new version is missing is the memory unit reader, however, so you'll have to use a flash drive to move your gamer profile, game progress and DLC if you haven't yet upgraded your Arcade unit to include a hard drive.

Microsoft has pinned the 250GB console's release price at \$299, which is R2300, but don't hold your breath for a direct conversion at the local retailers. The company also said that the unit is to go on sale immediately, which means that you'll likely be able to pick up a previous-generation Xbox 360 for a great price if you don't have the funds to purchase one of the new units.





Six times the fun

If you're an oldschool, side-scrolling platform-loving, *Megaman*-kind-of-difficulty-obsessed gamer, then *Castlevania* has probably been on your top-ten list since the original in the series. In that case, you're probably only tentatively excited about the upcoming *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* and its fancy 3D graphics. Thankfully, Konami has you and your sadistic videogame cravings covered with the headlining title on the next Xbox LIVE "Summer of Arcade" release list: *Castlevania: Harmony of Despair*.

The coyly-named *Castlevania: HD* will see up to six players co-operatively take on the quest to bring down Dracula, the Lord of Darkness. Additionally, there is the option to play the Survival Mode to "duke it out to see who the best vampire hunter," according to the press release. We can assume that this refers to some sort of versus mode.

This year's Summer of Arcade also includes *Hydro Thunder Hurricane*, *Lara Croft and the Guardian of the Light*, *Limbo*, and *Monday Night Combat*, if you can currently focus on anything other than six-player *Castlevania*.

>> MICROSOFT AND COD SITTING IN A TREE

Microsoft's Don Mattrick announced at their E3 press conference that they've signed a multi-year contract to have all future *Call of Duty* map packs and add-ons feature as timed exclusives for the Xbox 360. This isn't really too much of a shock, seeing as how the first two map packs for *Modern Warfare 2* (the *Stimulus* and *Resurgence* map packs) have both been timed exclusives for Microsoft's console, so it's not like PC and PS3 players aren't used to all this timed exclusivity mumbo jumbo already. The exclusivity deal will start off with *Call of Duty: Black Ops*, so expect all future *CoD* content to come to Xbox first. Mr Mattrick was so bold as to state this: "You'll want to get all your future *Call of Duty* games on Xbox."

USE THE KINECT, LUKE!

Motion- and gesture-controlled gaming always makes us think of lightsabers, so when Microsoft's demonstration of Kinect included a *Star Wars* title (imaginatively named *Kinect: Star Wars*) that uses Kinect as an input device for controller-free lightsaber duels, our hearts and midi-chlorians were aflutter. It's got lightsabers and gesture-controlled force powers like force push in it. To be honest, not much else is known about the game other than Darth Vader is in the trailer, so we're struggling to make this news piece more exciting...

Natal is reborn

As most of you should know, Project Natal was simply a codename for Microsoft's motion-sensing device. Well, it's finally been named, and it's called Kinect. Like, "kinetic" and "connect" – oh Microsoft, you're so wily. The name was revealed by Microsoft during a pre-E3 conference, where the unit was demoed and a few lucky journalists had the chance to try it out. The reactions were mixed, but most agree that it's at least as accurate as Nintendo's Wiimote. For now, it seems as though the Sony Move is leading the motion-sensing pack.

It was also revealed that the device will launch alongside a number of purpose-built titles, including a *Tamagotchi*-style animal game called *Kinectimals*; a racing title called *Joyride* that reads the motions of players' hands and bodies to control the on-screen vehicles; *Kinect Sports* which includes boxing, bowling, beach volleyball and others; and MTV Games' *Dance Central* that will "bring the *So You Think You Can Dance* experience home." Expect a slew of dance, fitness and gimmick games to follow.

Kinect is expected to launch towards the end of the year, which means that Microsoft still has some time to fine-tune the device and work out any criticisms it's likely to receive from the press over the next couple of months. As far as price is concerned, Microsoft had nothing concrete to say at the time of going to print, but they have said they will announce a price at GamesCon in August.



ADVANCED ARMoured WARFARE

As gameplay intensifies and the stakes get higher, any advantage makes a difference. This is why top-notch hardware requires a top-of-the-line chassis for maximum performance. HAF X fits the equation with unsurpassed airflow thanks to a meshed design, massive case cooling fans and a dedicated air duct for graphics cooling. It also features unmatched expandability with up to nine PCI-E slots, enough room for most XL-ATX boards and ability to install an internal radiator. With the inclusion of SATA docks and USB 3.0 compatibility, HAF X is in a class by itself.



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The Indie Investigator

by Rodain Joubert



Button-mashers

FROM TIME TO TIME, I like to commit e-pen to e-paper and write something about one-button games. These bastions of emergent complexity and innovative gameplay are often dismissed as trite or patently uninteresting (apparently a single input option is enough to make something "shallow"), but a good game developer can usually think of ways to make this restraint function with – and even improve upon – a game's core idea.

Take, for example, the recent Gamma IV games showcase. A few months back, some indie types organised a competition of sorts which involved creating games using only – surprise, surprise – a single button of input. One entry is an absolutely delightful underwater experience called *Fish Face*, where players control a fish (with a face, no less!) as it attempts to negotiate environmental hazards based on timing, momentum and natural buoyancy. This challenging and interesting game only ever requires a single command from players: hold a button to dive further down, or let it go to

The limited input didn't affect the developer's ability to create interesting and varied challenges

start gaining upward momentum.

The limited input didn't affect the developer's ability to create interesting and varied challenges: environmental obstacles came in a variety of flavours, from simple walls of pixel-collision death to moving blocks and underwater hoops. The various ways in which these obstacles can be combined offer an even nicer layer of complexity, all without straying from the single-button dynamic. Better yet, the game actually requires real skills to be developed while playing!

Input minimisation is often a key factor even in multi-input, "mainstream" games. Consider how *Batman: Arkham Asylum* manages to create an astoundingly fun and deep combat experience right from the beginning of the game, when players are introduced to just two primary buttons for all early fighting experiences. And arcade fighter heavyweights such as *Soul Calibur* still require only four face buttons and a single movement stick, providing elegant and interesting combat without the help of dozens of keyboard shortcuts.

Single-button games epitomise this elegance. While not all of them are necessarily good, the zingers out there can provide hours of entertainment when they're built properly, and indie game showcases like Gamma are a sterling example of what can be done with a simple on/off command switch.

You can find *Fish Face* and some others on the DVD.



Nintendo 3DS at E3

Finally some concrete info

AS EXPECTED, NINTENDO FINALLY debuted their new Nintendo 3DS handheld console at this year's E3. The successor to the DS range of handhelds, in case you've been living under a digital rock or cannot fathom why there is a "3" in its title, will feature a 3D screen that doesn't require glasses. How will that work? Through the inclusion of a parallax barrier on the top screen. Top screen? Yes there are still two screens and the clam-shell design remains intact. However, the unit will include an analogue stick (dubbed the "Slide Pad"), lower touch screen, a motion sensor and gyroscope, more powerful graphics, built in Wi-Fi and three cameras – one on the inside facing the user, and two on the outer shell for taking 3D photographs. The unit will have a cartridge slot for DS cards as well as 3DS cards, and there is also an SD Memory card slot.

The top, 3D enabled screen is 3.5 inches

with a resolution of 800x240 pixels. For displaying images in 3D, 400 of those 800 pixels will be for each eye. The lower, touch enabled screen is 3.02 inches with a resolution of 320x240. The unit itself measures in at 5.3 x 2.9 x 0.8 inches and will weigh a little over 220 grams.

A number of first and third party titles have been announced, and the Nintendo launch title for the unit will be *Kid Icarus: Uprising*, which looks amazing. Further 3D enabled titles in the pipeline include: *Animal Crossing*, *Mario Kart*, *Star Fox 64 3D*, *Paper Mario*, *DJ Hero 3D*, *Super Street Fighter IV 3D*, *Resident Evil: Revelations*, *The Sims 3*, *Bomberman* and a new *Professor Layton* game called *Mask of Miracles*. Note, however, that this list is far from exhaustive – there truly is a ton of titles heading in the direction of the Nintendo 3DS. No pricing or release date has been confirmed but we can't wait to get out grubby mitts on one!



» WHO NEEDS ACTUAL DRIVING ANYWAY?

At Microsoft's jam-packed (with glorious, glorious news) E3 press conference, it was announced that popular racing series *Forza* will get some Kinect interactivity of its own, adding it to the growing list of party games and tiger-tickling simulators already associated with Microsoft's motion controller.

There's more to this announcement than just the ability to drive a beautifully recreated car with an invisible steering wheel. Microsoft showed the sort of interactivity that gear heads are sure to go crazy over, like the ability to walk around your in-game pride and joy and inspect those metallic curves you know so well. Popping the hood, opening and closing doors, a hovering cursor that you can drag around over various parts of the car to bring up detailed menus of information – all of this was shown as possible via Kinect. Once you're inside your car, Kinect will track your head movements and allow you to look around in the game. Turn 10 is handling development of all these new features. The official *Forza* website calls the E3 demonstration a "Forza Motorsport Preview" that was meant to give "a select peek at one aspect of the future of the *Forza Motorsport* franchise." The website also states that the next *Forza* title will ship in 2011 and will make use of some of the features displayed in the demo.



>> LOCAL BUBBLES

We always enjoy promoting local game development, and I-Imagine is one of those companies that's been through so much turmoil in the past that it'd be a shame to let this one slide. Their latest game, entitled *Touch Burst*, is for the iPhone; players will have to make use of the device's touch-screen to pop bubbles as they appear on the screen. There are three game modes: Clean Burst, which requires that you pop only the clean bubbles; Number Burst, in which you need to pop sequentially-numbered bubbles as quickly as possible; and Add Burst, which requires you to pop the bubbles that contain the correct answer to a mathematical challenge. The game also includes microphone support, which allows players to activate power-ups by blowing into the mic. If you're looking for a bit of arcade fun, head over to the App Store and purchase this little game.

Sonic gets kinected

Sonic the Hedgehog has been doing the kart-racing rounds for a while now - the recently-released *Sonic & SEGA All-Stars Racing* being his most recent appearance. Now, to hop on board the Kinect bandwagon, *Sonic Free Riders* (which is a sequel to the 2008 *Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity* for the Wii and PS2) will have players "twisting, turning and jumping in an exhilarating race to be the first to cross the finish line," according to SEGA's recent press release.

The game will feature characters from the *Sonic* series, but players will also be able to use their Avatars as in-game characters. In true kart-racing fashion, there will be collectable power-ups that can be used to gain an advantage during the race, which you'll have to deploy by "throwing, shaking, or swinging your arms." We're not sure exactly what they mean by throwing one's arms, but it sounds painful.

Sonic Free Riders should be available before Christmas this year, shortly after the release of the Kinect system.

>>

JUST BEAT IT

Ubisoft just can't let a sleeping dog lie, or in this case, a deceased pop star. Their upcoming Michael Jackson game, creatively entitled *Michael Jackson: The Game*, is pretty light on details at the moment but we know that it will be a singing and dancing game that will have support for every motion-sensing system on the planet. Since we haven't yet seen a game that combines singing and dancing, this is almost a big deal for the rhythm game market, but we just can't get excited about this. Regardless, this might be right up your street, in which case you can look forward to jamming along to songs like *Beat It* and *Billy Jean* with all of Jackson's signature moves, by Christmas this year.



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Miktar's
Meanderings

by Miktar Dracon



1 x Opinion Column
(10 calories)

SAY HELLO TO MEYER. Meyer here is a friend (name changed to protect the innocent) who is the type of gamer I like to call the "mono-gamer". Mono-gamers have a special place in my heart, because I consider them a dying breed. Email me if you disagree, I'd be curious to hear your thoughts. Or just catch me on the NAG forums. Anyhow... Mono-gamers aren't picky or fussy gamers (see, Meyer agrees). They come in many flavours. Some play one genre, some play more and some play anything as long as it meets their mono-gamer conditions. Mono-gamers only ask for two things. First, that it contain enough content to last them

The mono-gamer won't buy quick thrills, or when they do upon accident or a bad recommendation, they are quick to return it or not buy from that developer again, or trust that reviewer/publication again.

longer than the norm for games these days, which is like five hours when you look at the "highly considered" games right now, like *God of War 3* or *Modern Warfare 2*. Meyer told me he thinks most games these days are all flash, no substance. Talking about single-player here of course. It's far too easy for a multi-player game to be a mono-gamer game, because multi-player is a force-multiplier when it comes to content. Provided the game itself is good. Which brings me to the second thing a mono-gamer requires: that a game be "good".

What is "good"? Well, that's subjective and not important right now. Meyer thinks *GTAIV* is good, I don't. We're both right. If you want me to discuss "what is a good game" in my next column, email my editor so he can feel smug about suggesting it to me as if it were his idea, and he's so "in tune with the gamers" which is why it's such a good idea. (Love you, RedTide).

It takes a special kind of single-player game to satisfy a mono-gamer, sports games aside. The mono-gamer won't buy quick thrills, or when they do upon accident or a bad recommendation, they are quick to return it or not buy from that developer again, or trust that reviewer/publication again. Which is why Meyer reads NAG. He trusts us.

Oops, out of time. Tune in next month! Wave goodbye to the nice people, Meyer.



Portal 2, Steam coming to PS3

Details on the game and its delicious, moist cake

THE DEVELOPERS OVER AT Valve have always been outspoken about their unwillingness to develop for the PS3. It came as an enormous surprise then when Gabe Newell walked on stage at Sony's E3 press event and announced to the entire world that not only would *Portal 2* be coming to the PS3 on the same day the PC and Xbox versions are released, but that Valve's popular digital distribution platform, Steam, would be coming to the PlayStation Network as well. As such, *Portal 2* will be Steamworks enabled (meaning all sorts of glorious extras like automatic game updates and Steam Cloud support will feature) on the PS3, complete with all the community features like in-game chat. It will not, however, support cross-platform play. Newell went so far as to say that the PS3 version of the game will be "the best version on any console".

Right then, are you done with all your rampant fanboy shrieking/whooping/ moaning? Good, because there's more important stuff to discuss here, like actual details on *Portal 2*. You'll once again play as Chell, the protagonist from the original. It's been many years since your escape from the lab and defeat of the maniacal, yet oddly lovable computer, GLaDOS (who could kill you and somehow make you happy about it). You return to find the lab (and GLaDOS) in ruins, the whole place now overgrown with vegetation. As is usually the case with these sort of things, story stuff happens and the

lab starts rebuilding itself. GLaDOS starts rebuilding itself. "*Portal* was a game that created an emotional attachment stronger than any game we've ever shipped," said Erik Johnson, product manager for *Portal 2*. "And it kind of surprised us. We spent a fair amount of time thinking about what *Portal 2* should and shouldn't be." Their answer? To develop a game that'll attempt to capture the magic of the first by being a covertly story driven title that changes the perception that players have of traditional movement in games. What they don't want to do, however, is make a game so difficult that it's no longer fun. They're introducing new friends and tools, such as a gel that can be applied to surfaces to change their properties (one application of this gel is to allow you to bounce off of surfaces). While we're expecting the same stellar single-player experience the second time around, we're also keen to get our hands on the cooperative side of things, which sees two players working together to get through a separate round of GLaDOS' demented puzzles designed to see how the computer's test results change when two people are involved instead of just one. Expect to see a preview of the game (due for release in 2011) in the magazine in the coming months as soon as we've had a chance to get hands-on time with it. The most important thing to consider in all of this is that GLaDOS is, as the meme-making song suggested, still alive...

>>

AK-47S FOR EVERYONE!

If you like guns, and you like games, then EA has just the thing for you: the EA Gun Club. No, this isn't one of those organisations that involve old, camouflaged men who like to go hunting with automatic weapons, but rather it's a program developed by EA that will give members special access to the publisher's line-up of war-themed games. Early beta access, exclusive demos, weapon unlocks and breaking news await anyone who manages to squeeze themselves into this group. The Gun Club launched with early access to the Medal of Honour beta for *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* owners who have pre-ordered *MoH*; we're sure that more opportunities will arrive soon, as we've already seen weapons in *BF: BC2* that came directly from *Battlefield 1943*.



Time for a PlayStation Move update

It's true, Sony didn't exactly have the most amazing E3 this year, but they did at least provide some concrete information on upcoming titles and hardware.

PlayStation Move looks set to hit the European market on 15 September and the North American market four days later. The retail price of Sony's new controller is \$49.99 which should equate to about R350 but we're guessing it'll be closer to the region of R500. What's more, for those who lack the obligatory PlayStation Eye, a second bundle option will be available that packs the controller with the camera and a copy of *Sports Champions* for \$99.99, or probably about R1,000. Ouch. What's that? You'll need to pay a little extra for the Nunchuk navigation controller as well? Oh boy, this is getting

expensive; that adds another \$29.99 or probably R350 for us. Wow. So now we've dropped over a grand to be able to play Move games... by ourselves. Double that wad of cash if you want to play any two-player games. And what about the games that require a player to have two Move controllers? It looks like you're going to need to save a bit in order to make the most out of Sony's dabble into the motion controlled gaming scene. It's a good thing then that there are some pretty solid titles that have been announced to support Move from the get-go, like *Killzone 3* and *LittleBigPlanet 2*. What's more, some already released games will support the new controller through future updates, such as Quantum Dreams excellent *Heavy Rain*.

>> NEW PREMIUM SERVICE HITS PSN

A couple of months ago Sony put out a survey that hinted at the possibility of them offering a premium online service akin to Microsoft's Xbox Live Gold. Well, they announced the new plan at this year's E3; say hello to PlayStation Plus. While the regular PSN service will remain unaltered, the new PlayStation Plus will feature a number of additional, value-adding bits and bobs.

So, what exactly constitutes an "enhanced experience" for \$49.99 (about R350) a year? Plus members will gain access to exclusive downloadable content and "full game trials" – which we assume means full versions of PSN games on a timed trial basis. Furthermore, PSN store discounts will be offered that sound very similar to the Xbox Live Gold membership's Deal of the Week.

Sony also hinted that subscribing members will get access to one free PSN game per month. Aside from that there really isn't much else comparable to Xbox Live Gold that they can offer that isn't already offered for free on the vanilla PSN.

We'll have to watch this space to see how things pan out, but the one free PSN game per month does sound interesting.

New game from creators of fIOW and Flower leaked

If you own a PlayStation 3 and have not yet experienced the undeniably sublime *fIOW* and *Flower* from developers thatgamecompany, then go and do it NOW! They're both available on the PlayStation Network and are going for a song. For those who have already experienced those titles (and they truly are experiences) then surely the news of another game from thatgamecompany is enough to make you giddy with anticipation. Sadly for the developers, information on their newest title has been leaked, but that's great for the rest of us! *Journey* will be the fourth game from the developers and will feature an optional online experience. At first glance the game has a definite *Shadow of the Colossus* feel to it and looks set to elicit similar emotions of loneliness and desolation that Team ICO's game did so masterfully. Players take on the role of a traveller journeying through a mysterious land brimming with mysteries and secrets. You're free to go it alone, but it's likely that you'll come across other players online as you traverse the vast wilderness, at which point you may decide to journey together for a while before parting company. So far the game is pegged for a 2011 release date and will be a PlayStation Network exclusive.

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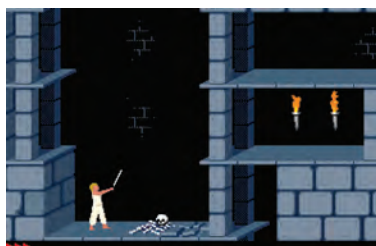
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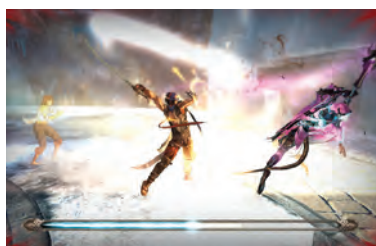
1989 – Prince of Persia



1999 – Prince of Persia 3D



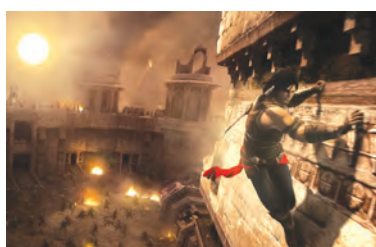
2003 – The Sands of Time



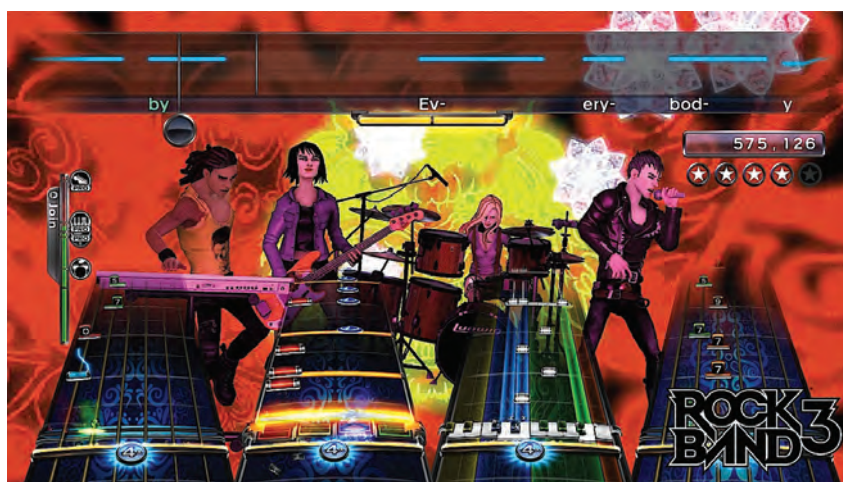
2008 – Prince of Persia (again)



2010 – Jake Gyllenhaal



2010 – The Forgotten Sands



Are you ready to Rock?

Harmonix shows off some fancy new features in Rock Band 3

ROCK BAND DEVELOPERS HARMONIX are so totally over the concept of rhythm games as we know them. The company recently announced that *Rock Band 3* is on its way, and they threw in a few incredibly impressive pieces of information that represent a leap from "hitting my plastic guitar to the pretty colours on the screen" to "you know what, I'm actually playing music over here."

First off, there's a brand-new instrument: a 17-key keyboard that will cover two full octaves. To accommodate this drastic change to the line-up, there will be a selection of synth, piano and keyboard-heavy songs that you can play, but you'll also be able to play the keyboard in place of the guitar or bass, if that's your thing. The keyboard will also include a handle with buttons for added effects: what is known as a keytar if you're familiar with and/or stuck in the '80s.

Perhaps the biggest change to the game is the presence of the new pro mode. In this mode, everything changes to be more like the real instrument. The keyboard track will use all 17 keys, the drums will use the three additional cymbals for a total of eight tracks (including the four pads and bass pedal), the vocals will increase in difficulty, but it's the guitar that gets the biggest adjustment. The new standard guitar will feature six string-like strum bars as well as buttons all the way up the neck (six per fret), and the optional pro mode guitar (it's unclear at this point if this is required for the mode or not) will be outsourced to Fender under their Squier brand;

in particular, a Stratocaster. This guitar will use actual strings and is a full-sized guitar. In fact, we're struggling to figure out if we couldn't just use a real guitar; stay tuned for details on that.

With all of these new features, Harmonix isn't just going all-in to appeal to the hardcore crowd and real musicians. The basic play modes will still be there and many features from the previous *Rock Band* titles will make their way into *RB3*, including all the old DLC that you've been hording for years. Additionally, pro mode doesn't automatically mean "you're screwed if you're not an actual professional," as you'll be able to select various difficulty modes within the pro mode, as well as enter practice mode that will allow you to turn the speed down as much as fifty percent.

There are a few other changes to the game, such as social networking integration, custom playlists, challenge modes and the three-vocalist harmony system from *RB: Beatles* and *Green Day*, but it's the pro mode and keyboard that really stand out for us. *Rock Band 3* is looking for release in Q4.



GUITAR HERO 6 GETS DETAILED

While the folks at Harmonix work on creating the next step in music peripheral gaming, the team behind the upcoming *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* are doing their best to improve on in-game content rather than innovate on the hardware front.

Warriors of Rock promises to be "infused with the power of rock," and will give players an actual storyline to progress through. Players will be tasked to save rock from whatever foul means is out to destroy it, by releasing the Demigod of Rock and turning themselves into powerful creatures built from the purity of rock music, thereby gaining unique gameplay bonuses that will put the tried-and-trusted Star Power system to shame. The game will feature all of the fancy new nik naks from the previous title, such as Party Play mode and all DLC that you may have purchased for *GH5*. There's also talk of Kinect and Move support to be added at a later date.

The playlist has also been revealed, and includes some fantastic rock tracks for you to, er, rock out to. The list includes *Children of the Grave* by Black Sabbath, *Pour Some Sugar on Me* from Def Leppard, Megadeth's *Sudden Death* and *Stray Cat Blues* from The Rolling Stones. To keep the appeal as fresh and mainstream as possible, there will also be a number of modern rock songs from Rammstein, Linkin Park, Drowning Pool, Muse and more.



This is how it's meant to be done

The first *MotorStorm* title was great fun and its sequel even more so, and now, because all good things come in threes, *MotorStorm* is getting its next proper sequel (not including the PSP's Arctic Edge, although that was good too). Anyway, *MotorStorm Apocalypse* is not only an awesome name, but a fantastic looking game if the initial press release stuff is anything to go by.

Despite obvious visual links to the excellent 1998 racer *Powerslide*, *MotorStorm Apocalypse* will take place mostly within the urban confines of a mid-apocalyptic city, creatively named "The City". Sony is calling it "Brutal Urban Off-Road Racing," and while that doesn't make a lot of sense when you first read it, it sounds like something we can't wait to do. The "story" present here is that when The City is abandoned due to some catastrophic event, the 'Stormers move in and start racing all over the place. Decaying buildings and bridges make for treacherous raceways, and they'll fall apart as you cruise through them, affecting the track in a manner that sounds hauntingly similar to *Split/Second's* system. Except in this game, there's talk of racing through office buildings, subways, sewers and all sorts of typical urban environments, and when the damage is done to a track, it's done for good. Even when you've finished the race and for some reason end up in the same location, the damage that was inflicted on the landscape previously will still be evident. Add to that the promise of four-player split-screen, vehicle perks in multiplayer, 16 players online and a custom rules mode, and you may consider us officially excited.



It's getting hot in here

Need for Speed III: Hot Pursuit marked an important part of the *NFS* history because it significantly improved the pursuit system from *NFS2*, and for the first time put players behind the wheel of a police cruiser with the purpose of chasing down their fleeing prey. After *Shift*, it became clear that EA has figured out that shaking up the *NFS* series is the key to success, so the next game in the series, *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit*, is going to be developed by *Burnout* developers Criterion Games.

Hot Pursuit will follow the same basic idea

of *NFSIII*, and in a sense can be considered a remake of the 1998 game since it will offer players the same bits and pieces that were available then, combined with the technological advances made by modern *NFS* titles. The game will allow players to take on the roles of both the police and racers, and will use a Facebook-like social interaction system called Autolog. Vehicles to look out for include the Koenigsegg CCX, McLaren MP4-12C, Pagani Zonda Cinque and Bugatti Veyron 16.4. You can expect *Hot Pursuit* to be on shelves this November.

>>
SHE MAY NOT
LOOK LIKE
MUCH...

BioWare is taking a different approach to player housing with their upcoming MMO *Star Wars: The Old Republic*. That being - wait for it... spaceships! Not much news came out of EA's E3 press conference on the much-anticipated, *Star Wars*-themed MMORPG, but the prospect of owning our own spaceships is pretty damn newsworthy on its own in our opinion. It's worth mentioning that Alderaan, the peaceful planet which Princess Leia called home until all that nasty business with the Death Star in *A New Hope*, was named as a player-versus-player battle zone in the game. Just out of curiosity, how many of you readers just called dibs on the names "Millenium Falcon", "Century Hawk" or "Decade Rough Faced Shag" for their ships?

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They Said It...

"Our Spider-Man games have sucked for the last five years. They are bad games. They were poorly rated because they were bad games."

Bobby Kotick, Activision CEO

"Whenever we ship a game, a faction of the team is always going to say, 'That was really neat, but what if we did this?' It always happens... even after you've shipped something that you think is ultimately cool and complete. There's always something else that you can do."

Dennis Shirk, producer on *Civilization V*

"The bottom line is this: if you have a good connection to OnLive and your gear is low latency, you have a low latency experience. It works. It really does. It's never going to be low latency as having the exact same computer capability locally. I think that's an obvious thing. There's a load of latency introduced by the Internet."

Steve Perlman, OnLive CEO



Mortal Komeback

MORTAL KOMBAT IS MAKING a return. Now, while that wouldn't normally warrant much attention because, let's face it, the latest MK titles haven't exactly lived up to their legacy, this latest announcement is important because this next title looks like it'll finally give the hardened *Street Fighter* crowd something to nod approvingly at. The game is set to make a return to its 2D roots in terms of the actual combat platform, but will remain a 3D game, much like *SF4*, although there's not yet any mention on whether the hit-boxes will be 2D or 3D; regardless, that means no more side-strafing or funny business with 3D cameras.

Judging from the release trailer that recently made the rounds, the new *Mortal Kombat* is looking fantastic, and features many familiar faces and moves. The game promises to return to its gory roots as well, so no more toned-down violence or any of that other silly stuff that removed some of its charm. There is also a tag-team gameplay mode, although it's not clear if that's the norm or simply an option. Despite all of this, the most important news is that original co-creator Ed Boon will not be developing the combat system, which means we can expect something more in line with modern titles that should be perfect for the obsessive fighter fans out there to get stuck into.



Désilets get outta here

YOU MAY RECOGNISE THE name Patrice Désilets. If not, know that he's an important guy, having worked at Ubisoft's Montréal studio since its inception (he had since become the studio's creative director) and also having played a pivotal role in revitalising the *Prince of Persia* franchise with his work on 2003's *The Sands of Time*. Then there's the small matter of a little, multimillion-dollar franchise known as *Assassin's Creed*. Désilets was creative director on both AC titles and was busy working on *AC: Brotherhood* (the next iteration - which now features multiplayer - of the wildly successful and critically acclaimed franchise) when rumours began circulating that Désilets had walked out on Ubisoft. A short time later, the rumour was confirmed by Game Informer, with Désilets citing that he will be taking "a creative break from the industry". It's unclear what brought on his sudden

departure from the studio, but according to trustworthy (well, not really, but you know...) news source, The Internet, Désilets might have been unhappy with the path that Ubisoft was leading the AC franchise down with their desire for rapid-fire sequels. Perhaps he doesn't like Ubisoft's sudden urge to follow in Activision's footsteps and churn out annual sequels for all their profitable franchises. What this all means for Altair, Ezio and any other assassin (and Desmond, of course) that may appear in the series remains to be seen, but this is all a bit worrying for the future of AC. Ubisoft has assured everyone that Brotherhood's development will not be affected, because Désilets' required contribution to the game had already been completed. At least Désilets will have no trouble finding work when he returns from his creative break, what with his résumé and the abundance of Montréal-based game development studios.

>> ANOTHER WORLD CREATOR CRAFTING ANOTHER

Do you know who Eric Chahi is? We do. He's the creator of the 1991 masterpiece *Another World* (known to North American gamers as *Out of This World*), a gorgeous, atmospheric and very memorable title that many gamers still hold very dear. Two years ago Chahi started work at Ubisoft and is currently developing a new game over at their Montpellier studio. The game's working title is *Project Dust*, and Chahi has called it the spiritual heir to *Populous*. He also says that one of the game's other influences is *Rez*, because music will play a significant role in the game. Set in an alternate version of Earth where nature's power is unleashed in much more violent, terrifying ways than what we're used to, with major disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions being a common, daily occurrence, this god game will let players toy with powers that allow them to manipulate elements of the world around them, such as by shaping the ground itself, controlling the flow of water (and lava!) and more. You'll have to keep your tribe of people from perishing in these devastating disasters and help them migrate and expand. The game is due for digital release in 2011 on PSN, Xbox Live and PC. If all you read in that long diatribe was "spiritual heir to *Populous*" before squealing with delight and then fainting, we understand.

Gaming Charts

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Look & Listen recommends

PS3

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa
UFC Undisputed 2010
Singularity
Red Dead Redemption
SBK X Superbike World Championship

XBOX 360

Red Dead Redemption
Alan Wake
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Conviction
Pure Football

PS2

FIFA 10 - Platinum
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010
Tekken 5 - Platinum
God of War II - Platinum
Grand Theft Auto San Andreas

PC

StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty
The Sims 3 Ambitions
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
Toy Story 3: The Video Game
Darksiders

PSP

ModNation Racers
Resistance: Retribution - Platinum
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4
LittleBigPlanet - Platinum
UFC Undisputed 2010

WII

Super Mario Galaxy 2
NewJ Fitness First Mind Body
Toy Story 3: The Video Game
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
NatGeo Quiz! Wild Life

DS

Shrek Forever After: The Game
Club Penguin: Herbert's Revenge
Sports Island DS
New Super Mario Bros.
Donkey Kong Jungle Climber



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Sales by game genre

ACTION

Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks (PS2)
God of War III (PS3)
GTA: Episodes from Liberty City (PS3)
God of War II (PS2)
Grand Theft Auto 3 (PS2)

SPORTS

Wii Sports (Wii)
FIFA 10 (PS2)
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2009 (PS2)
FIFA 10 (PS3)
FIFA 10 (360)

RACING

Forza Motorsport 3 (360)
MotorStorm Arctic Edge (PS2)
Need for Speed: Underground 2 (PC)
Need for Speed: Shift (PS3)
Crash Tag Team Racing (PS2)

SHOOTER

Battlefield: Bad Company 2 (PC)
Halo 3: ODST (360)
Far Cry 2 (PC)
Call of Duty 3 (PS2)
Call of Duty: World at War (PS2)

SOCIAL

Wii Fit + board (Wii)
Guitar Hero 5 (PS3)
Guitar Hero 5 (360)
Wii Fit (Wii)
Guitar Hero 5 (PS2)

ROLE PLAYING

The Sims 3 (PC)
The Sims 3: High-End Loft Stuff (PC)
The Sims 3: World Adventures (PC)
The Sims 2 Plus Pack (PC)
Final Fantasy XIII (PS3)

>>

SQUARE-ENIX, OBSIDIAN TEAM UP FOR NEXT DUNGEON SIEGE

Square-Enix recently revealed that they will publish the next title in the *Dungeon Siege* series, which will be developed by the industry's favourite RPG sequel go-to guys, Obsidian Entertainment. In case you hadn't noticed, Gas Powered Games isn't involved in the development, but lead-designer Chris Taylor, who created the first *Dungeon Siege* game as well as *Total Annihilation*, will stick around in an advisory capacity.

DSIII will return to the land of Ehb, in which the delicate balance between the most powerful factions of the land has fallen apart and the world thrown into chaos. The protectors of the land, the 10th Legion, have failed in their charge to keep the world safe. You play as one of the last of the Legion; it is your quest to piece together the broken land and all that sort of saving-the-day stuff.

While there aren't too many details available at the moment, we do know that Taylor's original goal to target the game as a single-player experience has been all but thrown out the door. Instead, *Dungeon Siege III* will feature a seamlessly-blended single/multiplayer experience with a strong focus on party and companion play, although Square is promising a very strong story that will be directly affected by the player's actions.

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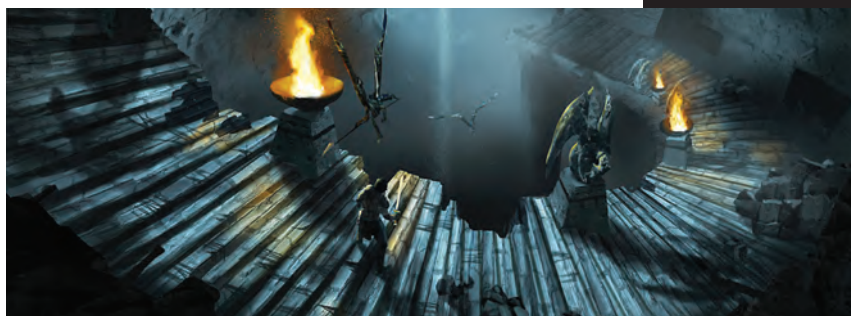
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Last Month's winner



Bradley Zebert, p45



Keep on riding

THE NEXT TITLE IN the *Driver* series has been doing its rounds in the rumour mill for some time, and now Ubisoft has finally confirmed to be in development for the PC, PS3, Xbox 360, Wii and even Mac, for release in Q4 2010. The game will return to detective Tanner, following his nasty run-in with Jericho at the end of *Driver3*, but the entire game will take place within Tanner's mind while he's trapped in a coma. It sounds weird, but the result will still be a classic *Driver* experience with just a couple of new features.

The biggest of the new features is what the developers are calling "Shift." This gives Tanner the ability to possess other drivers on the road at any time, by leaving his body and travelling up above the streets, and then diving into the unwilling recipient. Shift can be used at any time during chases or while Tanner is simply driving around, as well as during the "significant and heavy" multiplayer component of the game, according to Martin Edmondson, creative director of *Driver: San Francisco* and lead designer on the original *Driver*.

The game will also be the first in the series to feature licensed vehicles, probably largely owing to manufacturers finally loosening the reins on how much game developers are allowed to destroy their virtual vehicles. Over 100 cars from throughout history will make their way into the 100s of miles of San Francisco streets, including the 1974 Dodge Monoco from *Blue's Brothers*, *Dukes of Hazard's* 1969 Charger and the Challenger, seen recently in *Death Proof*.

"Any iconic car chase you can think of, those cars are in the world to be found and played with," Edmondson says.

Frickin' laser beams

Nothing says "nerdy but awesome" quite like a game of laser tag. If crawling around in the mud and getting a face full of paint isn't quite your scene, and you're not yet ready to commit to firing live ammunition at people trying to hop the border, then Ubisoft has the perfect solution to help you vent your secret pent-up cravings for outdoor activities.

They're calling it *Battle Tag*, and yes, it really is that same game from the '90s, minus the indoor battlefield that looks like something out of a Prodigy music video. The game will ship with two guns and four tags (presumably each person wears two, unless you're playing unarmed peasant rules) but will have support for up to eight players. Then, when you're done running around shouting "pew-pew!" at each other, you can upload your battle results to the Internet and presumably engage in some sort of online leaderboard or tournament. *Battle Tag* should be available towards the end of the year, and if you're not excited about this, you should seek professional help immediately.

Crysis enters the third dimension

We all know that *Crysis 2* is going to be a big deal. Heck, it's already a big deal and it hasn't even been released yet. During EA's press conference at this year's E3, the publisher revealed a neat bit of info about the upcoming title: it's going to support 3D displays across all platforms: PC, PS3 and Xbox 360. You'll obviously need a display capable of such feats of technology; hopefully prices for such devices would have dropped enough by time the game is released.

WTF? That's not Crysis

Crytek has proven that they're not only interested in overheating, melting and destroying PCs the world over by branching out and bringing *Crysis 2* to the Xbox 360 and PS3 as well. Now they're extending that branch even further with *Codename Kingdoms*, an Xbox 360 exclusive. Neither Microsoft nor the German studio had revealed a release date or any concrete details at the time of writing this, but from what we could tell the game appears to be a historical gladiator game, with violence and blood and shields and swords and axes and violent burly men covered in blood. Are you not entertained?

Battlefield expands

Battlefield: Bad Company 2 might not have stolen away the FPS crown from current reigning champ *Modern Warfare 2*, but it was a successful game that has enjoyed a positive reception in the local PC scene. To give their devoted players more stuff to blow up, EA is preparing to release the first expansion to the game. It's set to take place during the Vietnam War, and will bring with it a new single player campaign, weaponry and multiplayer maps and unlockables.

Competition Winners

- March 2010 Dremel competition:**
 - Nicholl Alexander, Roodepoort
- March 2010 God of War III hamper:**
 - Hedley Lamarque, The Wilds Pretoria
- Battlefield Bad Company 2 subscriptions competition:**
 - Juan-Paul McCracken, Bryanston
 - Cobus Human, Lynwood
 - Stefano Zanoncelli, Tecoma
 - Anton Engelbrecht, Secunda
 - Sugra Hussain, Actonville
 - Patrick Mayhew, Dowerglen



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Caption of the Month

Every month we'll choose a screenshot from a random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better one. The winner will a copy of *SBK X* for PS3 from Ster-Kinekor Entertainment. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line 'July Caption'.



NAG'S LAME ATTEMPT AT HUMOUR: "Dude, act casual... but your fly is unzipped."



LAST MONTH'S WINNER: "Do you know your monkey stole my Savanna?"
"No, but if you can hum it, I'll play it." - Deré Langford

MSSA 2010 Calendar

Tournament	Registrations Open	Registrations Close	Commences	Concludes	Venue
ASUS Western Cape eSports	14 June 2010	4 July 2010	17 July 2010	18 July 2010	Cape Town by The Lair
ASUS Interschool League		29 June 2010	July 2010	August 2010	Various schools
WCG Trials for GUITAR HERO sponsored by SAMSUNG		Qualifiers only	7 August 2010	7 August 2010	Sandton Square
ASUS S A National eSports	26 July 2010	23 August 2010	4 Sept 2010	5 Sept 2010	TBA
National Team Trials for the IeSF Grand Finals		Invitation only	TBA	TBA	TBA
IeSF Grand Finals		National Teams only	28 Oct 2010	1 Nov 2010	Deagu City, South Korea
28TH NATIONAL CONVENTION		Club delegates	12 Dec 2010	12 Dec 2010	Pretoria Boys High School

bt GAMES™ Release List

Dates subject to change without notice

JULY: WEEK 1

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	360, PS3, Wii
Front Mission Evolved	PC, 360

JULY: WEEK 2

Crackdown 2	360
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JULY: WEEK 3

Darksiders: Wrath of War	PC
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	PSP

JULY: WEEK 4

StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty	PC
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JULY: UNCONFIRMED DATES

Dance Party Club Hits + Mat	PS2
Dance Party Pop Hits + Mat	PS2
TNA iMPACT!: Cross the Line	PSP, DS
World of Outlaws: Sprint Cars	360, PS3

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DEAD RISING 2

WHEN THERE IS NO MORE ROOM IN HELL, THE DEAD WILL WALK THE EARTH



» Exclusive (for now, at least) to the Xbox version of the game will be *Case Zero*, a bit of paid-for DLC that will be available on Xbox LIVE Marketplace on 30 June if everything goes according to plan. It's set three years before *Dead Rising 2* and will showcase Chuck's first large-scale offensive against hordes of zombies in a desert town called Still Creek. It's got its own story that bridges the events between the original and its sequel. Keiji Inafune has assured us that rushing through *Case Zero* will equate to about three hours of game time, but as with the first game that time will be lengthened if you take time experimenting with and exploring the world. He also said that gamers who finish the prologue DLC before playing *Dead Rising 2* will be rewarded in some way.

You never realise just how distracting the moans of the undead can be until you experience it firsthand. The porky little American who'd been hogging the *Dead Rising 2* demo-station finally got bored of being useless at playing the game and waddled off, so we stepped up to try our hand at the sequel to one of the finest zombies-in-a-mall simulators ever made. At this point, a booth-babe trussed up to look like a zombie, locked in a cage to our left, decided she was going to provide a little ambience – by moaning loudly into our ears. Perhaps she felt she was earning her pay, perhaps she gets turned on by being in a cage, who knows.

SELF-RISING UNDEAD

Gone is Mr Photographer from *Dead Rising*, replaced by Mr Motorcyclist, who really wants to save his daughter from turning into a zombie. Mr Motorcyclist, unlike the previous protagonist, has an *imagination*. He can combine things, taking ordinary items found in a mall and turning them into weapons of zombie destruction. Mr Motorcyclist is well-suited to be stuck in the middle of a zombie apocalypse, conveniently confined to a well-stocked mall. Mike Schmitt, Product Manager for Capcom in the US, sidles up to us. He's a large man, with lovely hair.

"Fortune City is a great location to do this kind of game", he says. We agree. There are 6,000 zombies onscreen in the game we're playing (the first game could display 800). With so many zombies, location is everything. "Numerous hotel

casinos, all themed differently, connected via a shopping mall. It's very Las Vegas, and there's a huge outdoor area as well."

We explore Fortune City a little, marvelling at the detail and wall-to-wall zombie crowds. It's fun to pick up random items and see how well they work against the horde of undead. Water pistols don't work that well and nearly get us killed. Quad-bikes with chainsaws attached to the front: very useful. It is surprising, though, just how much like the first game the sequel feels, except you know, it's totally better in every way. Considering that *Dead Rising 2* is being done by a new developer, it's similarity to the first game is curious. Mr Schmitt can smell curious, leaning in to tell us that yes, it's a new developer, "but they are working in conjunction with Capcom in Japan, so a lot of the key members from the original team are involved in this project. It's a collaboration."

Ah, that explains it then. Two teams are bringing their unique talents to the game's development. It shows, too.

IT SHOWS

One area where the showing of it is most clear is the ability to combine items. There are "combo cards" you can find in the environment, which teach you which items make for good combinations. "Or, sometimes Chuck (Mr Motorcyclist), will look at a poster and get inspiration, then you'll get a card that way too", says Schmitt, reading our minds. All items that can be combined have a little wrench icon on them, so you can just trial-and-

1,824 DAYS LATER

It's been five years since the zombie outbreak in Willamette, Colorado. The zombie parasite that originated in Santa Cabeza has slowly crawled its way along the United States, turning folks all over the place into flesh-sucking zombies, intent on eating delicious brains. Frank West is taking a well-deserved vacation or something and we'd rather not waste a perfectly good zombie game on a zombie-free beach somewhere, so we're switching protagonists. Chuck Greene is his replacement, a former national motocross champion (which means no camera or photography for this sequel) who has a passion for combining motorcycles with chainsaws. He (along with you) finds himself in Fortune "Don't Call It Vegas, Baby" City with all the zombie croupiers, zombie strippers and zombie old ladies lurking around slot machines 'til you leave before hitting your jackpot. Chuck's fighting through the innumerable zombie hordes to save his daughter from becoming a mindless zombie child, since she's in a bit of a bad spot after she got infected with zombie flu during a zombie assault that took her mother's life. Chuck's got to earn cash to keep his daughter drugged up on Zombrex, an infection suppressant that Frank used in the original. This is all very lucky, because in the original, the infamously sinful city of Fortune City, like the infamously sinful city of Nevada on which it is based, is filled with money-making opportunities, providing he's willing to take risks...

"YOUR STEAMING STENCH PILE HAS A USE THOUGH: ZOMBIES WILL SLIP AND FALL IF THEY STEP IN THE STUFF."

WHO WANTS TO BE A ZOMBIE MILLIONAIRE?

Terror Is Reality – it's a game show. It's got zombies in it. We can't think of an easier way to win at being the best game show ever to have existed. It's also in *Dead Rising 2*. That makes *Dead Rising 2* full of win. And zombies. Lots of zombies. In the single player storyline, Chuck will have no choice but to partake of *Terror Is Reality's* violent brand of competition, as producer Keiji Inafune alluded to in an interview. In the multiplayer, players compete against one another to take home the TIR crown/trophy/decapitated zombie head.

"DEAD RISING 2 IS THE FIRST GAME ON STEROIDS..."



YOU KILLED IT WITH WHAT?!

One of the most captivating things about the original was the maniacal glee that came from experimenting with all the random junk scattered around the toy box-like wonderland that was the Willamette shopping mall. Using guitars to maim zombies, kicking soccer balls into undead faces and, umm, trying on cheerleader uniforms was part of the game's charm. You could spend hours just running around the mall, frantically hitting the action button until you found something worth using to smash zombie brains, or finding new recipes for the perfect smoothie mix. The sequel takes this to a whole new level with its combo cards that make combining items twice as deadly as it ever was in point-and-click adventures. Have a look at these lovably wacky combinations:

The Paddlesaw: Take some duct tape, a kayak paddle and a couple of chainsaws, mix 'em all together and you've got the Paddlesaw. Useful for crowd control, having two chainsaws duct taped to either end of a piece of kayaking equipment makes for double the zombie-shredding fun.

The Hail Mary: Footballs are aerodynamic, right? I bet if I strapped this hand grenade to one, I could make my boom go further. Just don't throw like a girl, or you'll lose a finger. And an eyeball. And your abdomen.

The Dynameat: Just about the best application of a McDonald's burger we've ever seen, simply use a bit of beef, one stick of dynamite and your imagination to create an explosively attractive (and delicious) snack for some brain lovers. It's not inhumane, either – everyone knows McDonald's never uses actual beef.

The Freedom Bear: If your giant stuffed teddy bear is looking a little worse for wear, why not help him go out as a hero by giving him Rambo's headband and a giant, cuddly machine gun to turn him into a bullet-spewing turret?

Miscellaneous: Other cool new items and weapons include playing cards that you can toss at enemies, toy helicopters with machetes attached to the blades, and motorcycles with chainsaws strapped to the handlebars. The silly humour isn't lacking in all this either: you can create glowing swords of light by combining flashlights and jewellery, for example. Oh – and giant hamster balls.



"THERE ARE 6,000 ZOMBIES ONSCREEN IN THE GAME WE'RE PLAYING..."





Dead Rising 2

"THE AI PATH FINDING IS MUCH IMPROVED..."

JUST GO ON WITHOUT ME

We can't imagine a better way to survive the zombie apocalypse than with a friend, and it seems that *Dead Rising 2*'s developers feel the same way. Online co-op (offline play will not be available) for two players has found its way into the game, which will allow a host to invite friends to their game at any time. The game save is stored on the host's machine, but the friend can drop out at any time and keep all the experience they earned and items they collected. If the players are separated at any time, a Chuck Greene icon will appear above each player's head that will display their status. Are they being eaten by zombies? Are they using the loo? Are their brains intact? Let the icons lead the way.

Online competitive multiplayer is also a new addition, with four players competing for the most kills in the *Terror Is Reality* game show. Giant hamster balls (make of that what you will), motorcycles, zombies and the ability to use dirty tactics to hinder other players – there's a reason the multiplayer has been compared to *American Gladiators*.

»

Worthy of its own place on this page is the game's alcohol and obesity problem. See, the only way to heal yourself in the sequel is by eating food or drinking. Lots of zombies means lots of self healing, but eating too much spoiled food or drinking ridiculous amounts of alcohol will cause you to vomit. The vomiting is randomly triggered, so you might suddenly drop to your knees and spew chunks like a teenage girl at a nightclub at 3 in the morning, all while you're in the middle of a heated melee. Your steaming stench pile has a use though: zombies will slip and fall if they step in the stuff. This creates some interesting cooperative opportunities as your buddy provides cover while you empty your gut near some zombies and merriment ensues.

error and see what's to discover. "I love the Paddlesaw", says Schmitt. "The two chainsaws at the ends of a rowing paddle."

At the demo-station to our right, a guy has just made the Paddlesaw in the game, and is laughing his head off as he scythes his way through giant hordes of zombies. Arms are being chopped off, zombie heads are rolling around on the floor, and blood is splashing on to the screen. We think the guy may have even killed the person he was trying to escort to safety, and just *doesn't* care.

In our session, we've managed to keep a big black woman (who carries a wrench) alive. We did our duty and brought her back to the safe house. She was quite capable of defending herself, elbowing through the zombies, hitting them repeatedly and just generally not being anything like the useless, whining meat sacks you had to rescue in the first game. "The AI path finding is *much* improved," says Schmitt, sounding a little embarrassed. "As you level up, your abilities get better. As you play through for the first time, all the little side-missions that pop up, you may not be agile enough to do. We want people to go through it, replay it, explore it – the world is so much bigger, there's so much more to see and do."

We weren't listening to Schmitt. We were too busy putting traffic cones on the heads of all the zombies inside a department store.

UNDEAD REDUX

So, it's very much like the first game then, but more polished in every way. There is still the element of time management, of not being able to do everything the first time through the game or certain events only occurring during later attempts once you're at a higher level or have a better understanding of the environment. Something that plagued the first game, weak control scheme and annoying cell phone calls aside, is that gamers didn't quite get what *Dead Rising* was trying to do with the whole multiple-play through system. No idea if they'll get it now either, but at least *Dead Rising 2* is a far easier game to play.

"The save system was overhauled – there's now three save slots, multiple locations where you can save, not just the one area. So it's much more forgiving you could say, and more convenient for the player," says Schmitt. "*Dead Rising 2* is the first game on steroids. More stuff to do, explore, more zombies. It's easy to pick up and play for the casual person, yet all the challenge and deepness the hardcore could want is there to. We really want you to give it a try."

But Mike, we're playing it **right now**. "Oh, I was talking to your readers." Oh, well that's all right then.

NAG

Dane Remendes | Miktar Dracon

DEVELOPER > Trickstar Games PUBLISHER > Codemasters RELEASE DATE > July 2010 WEB > www.playcricket2010.com GENRE > Sport Simulation PLATFORMS: > Xbox 360 | PS3

International Cricket 2010

Bat, field and bowl like you mean it!

CRICKET GAMES AREN'T AS plentiful as fans of the sport would like, and often the team behind the title doesn't get the varied dynamic of a real game of cricket just right. However, the team behind *International Cricket 2010* (most of the same guys that created *Ashes Cricket 2009* last year) have been hard at work to capture the elements of the game in ways that are not only sensible, but exciting for the player, too. The team has taken the good ideas that they implemented in *Ashes*, and have gone a little further, in an effort to deliver a top-notch cricket simulator.

Australian producer John Szoke took a few moments to chat with NAG about what we can expect from this upcoming sports title, as well as the changes they have made to the *Ashes* formula to deliver a better game.

>How will the "action cam" impact on the game dynamics? Is this a purely cosmetic addition, or will it help players to tackle the game in new ways?

The Action Cam puts you on the pitch with your player: You are in the action. We all originally thought this was going to be a mode for experienced players but everyone finds timing much more natural and you very rarely see a member of the dev team using the old-fashioned broadcast cam now. There are so many little touches to Action Cam, like judging a quick single or seeing if you've picked the gap in the field which makes playing *IC2010* much more natural and more like playing the real game, rather than watching it.

Once you've tried it, I suspect most people won't want to play it in the retro broadcast camera ever again.

>Will the claim of official stadia, kits and players only apply to licensed teams? In other words, will South African fans have to live with weird player names again?

Yes, these will be for licensed teams only, though players will be able to edit their own teams. We also have three times more kit items than in *ACO9*, and nearly all licensed: new bats, pads etc from the 2010 range of an expanded roster of manufacturers.

>Press releases state that the new "Power Stick" idea will enhance batting, bowling and fielding. While the impact on batting from 360 degree control is quite obvious, how will this implementation affect fielding and bowling?

The Power Stick is purely a batting enhancement. The addition of analogue shot power is massive: essentially beforehand you were always aiming to hit



the boundary with ground and loft shots, and the timing had a huge influence on how successful that was. With analogue shot power, you can specify how hard you want to hit it: aiming for boundary, dropping it short or aiming for a 3/4 loft over the infield's head. The strength with which you try to hit the ball will affect the timing window, so you can play safer, softer shots until you've built the confidence to smack it over the stands.

Lots of nuances have been added to the AI in response to this and you can expect a much greater challenge than before. When bowling it will try to stop boundaries and place fielders in the outfield to stop repeated/favourite shots of players.

> Can we expect improvements to animations?

This year we have gathered a substantial amount of new motion capture for the game, particularly for bowling and fielding. As a result, the animations are a substantial improvement over *Ashes 2009*. Furthermore, you will notice a massive leap in the quality of player likenesses, something which we were pulled up on last year.

> Will some of the online multiplayer issues from *Ashes* be addressed in this new game? If so, what can players expect?

The team have added a player rating which acts like a sportsmanship rating

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The game is, "officially licensed by the ECB (England and Wales Cricket board) and Cricket Australia, IC 2010 includes official players, stadia and kits, for an authentic cricket experience."



"The team have added a player rating which acts like a sportsmanship rating that is affected by quitting etc. There will be something there for players to see what other players are like when choosing who to play against."

that is affected by quitting etc. There will be something there for players to see what other players are like when choosing who to play against. In terms of "general fair play", we rely to an extent on people to play the way the game is meant to be played. There's nothing we can do to eliminate it, but we've taken steps to minimise it. Where there are rules prohibiting something we can enforce them. If you think someone isn't playing "fair," then sometimes the only recourse is to walk off and refuse to play them. We've added some sportsmanship stats that will help reduce the issues of online quitting. Obviously this won't solve the problem but the game will provide the user with more information about the other player before making the decision to play them. Unfortunately we can't do anything about players quitting, that's their own decision but we think they struggle to find games down the track.

> Will players be able to build their own teams and, if so, how will this be regulated in online multiplayer environments?

The editing functions are the same as last year but we have expanded the International Team roster to 16 and included 10 All Star teams. All teams have Test, ODI and 20 Over uniforms (including Home and Away versions).

> Will there be any changes to the way catching works in the game?

The catching has remained relatively unchanged from last year as we felt the system worked well.

> Will day / night games be playable at all stadia?

Yes.

> What was your biggest challenge in developing this game?

The biggest challenge was sticking true to the basis of *Ashes Cricket 09*. *Ashes 09* was the biggest leap forward in Cricket games in recent history. We had to make sure that the game was accessible, yet had the depth that Cricket fans want. This is a tricky balance. On top of that there are 3 forms of Cricket (Twenty20, ODI and Test) that have to be supported and be experienced differently in the game. This is where a lot of work was undertaken. *IC2010* is a deeper and much more involving and well paced game than *Ashes 2009* or any cricket game before it. The longer you play the more you will experience!

> Was there anything cool that was left out of the final game due to technical or logistical reasons?

Whilst I'd love to say the game has everything we could possibly want it's simply not the case. Nor is this the case for 99% of games released. Action Cam was a big feature that could have made it into *Ashes Cricket 09* had the Ashes actually been played a couple of months later. As it turned out once we started playing with it again it was the driving force behind *IC2010*. I can't go into any specifics but there are already many other features being planned for the next cricket game. These features need to be weighed up against factors like timeframes, competing features, *IC2010* feedback, current cricket climate (3 forms of the game currently supported) and so on.

> What platform was the game developed on?

The game was developed on and will be available for Sony PS3 and Xbox 360. **NAG**
Walt Pretorius



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Test Drive Unlimited 2
will be the 10th game
in the series



Test Drive Unlimited 2

Second time's the charm...

GENRE > Racing

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED WAS defined by its dog-eared ambition. A radical departure for the *Test Drive* brand, *Unlimited* took a giant left turn across the sea to a Hawaiian isle where it staked its claim to being an open world sports car collector's MMORPG-light. The realisation of such a tall order turned out to be rough around the edges; *TDU* was in the estimation of many, not entirely baked through. It still won its fans, several hundred thousand of them. And if there's one thing that publishers bank on, it is that fans will always go for another round of "more and better".

Test Drive Unlimited 2 arrives in a racing market even more crowded than its predecessor had to face. Sandwiched between arcade racers to the left (*Blur*, *Split/Second*) and simulation kings to the right (*Forza 3*, *Gran Turismo 5*, and *Race* on the PC) *TDU2*'s strategy appears to be simple: keep low, stick to the fan base and refine everything they liked about the original, and add in a carefully calculated set of new features that do not branch out the *TDU* experience so much as flesh it out.

WELCOME TO IBIZA!

The biggest single change is venue; from Oahu, Hawaii to Ibiza, Spain, *TDU2* expands the size of its map by two-and-a-half times the real estate. As before, the map still swoops up into the clouds and back again. Effort has gone into making the topography accurate. To take advantage of this new location, the next



most significant difference is that bikes are gone, replaced with off-road 4x4 vehicles – though bikes will return later via DLC – a pill to swallow for some, to be sure. The 4x4s get to show off *TDU2*'s new environmental effects; driving off road will muddy up your ride, rain will wash it off, and sun will dry out a damp finish. Leaving the top down on your convertible during a sudden thunderstorm will result in wet seats and a dripping dashboard.

A bigger and more luscious world also benefits the new co-op passenger feature – a friend can join you in the cockpit for sight-seeing, browsing available online modes, and racing. And owing thanks to the increasingly common "gotta catch 'em all" design ethic in video games, discovering a wrecked exclusive car somewhere in the wild will transfer it to your garage for patching up. The final





"... the next most significant difference is that bikes are gone, replaced with off-road 4x4 vehicles."

wrinkle added is a 24 hour day and night cycle; more than a shifting set of values on the scenery, it enables night life, which plays into TDU's greatly expanded multiplayer component. What's more, progress through a simulated "rags to riches" career will eventually allow a return visit to Hawaii - with expanded roads and free ranges. Eden also responded to one of the most-repeated bits of player feedback: the fact that people just like to cruise around without a specific mission. True, most open world racing games allow you to do this; but in a cunning twist, *TDU2* introduces "cruising chains". Perform casual drifts, jumps, and stunts while out for a Sunday drive, and you'll rack up combos that earn money. But, wipe out, and you lose it.

LIVE THE LIFE

No longer are you restricted to walking around just the garage; the entire house is open for guests. Greater emphasis on personalisation of player avatars and environment is worked into the campaign - become successful enough and you'll earn a private yacht for mingling with 32 online friends - complete with Jacuzzi. New persistent world stats: socialisation, competition, collections, and discovery all factor into progression; it isn't only racing that will earn experience points for a driver's ID card. Create a racing clan in the form of a car club and upgrade the clubhouse to get garages. More pointedly, and deliciously for the competitive, there are exclusive prestige cars that one, and only one, player may own and drive at a time. It's an idea that other games have toyed with, but in *TDU's* highly social atmosphere, it seems like a natural progression of layering on MMO-like mechanics. Clubs may also fill up a war chest for competing in showdowns and tournaments. There is yet more, including player profiles sporting photographs snapped

in-game and more social networking features planned and teased, with a full reveal in the future. But, Eden Games wishes *TDU2* to encourage a more spontaneous frame of mind than the original.

Under the hood, the physics in *TDU2* remain unchanged at the core, with new assists to ease in a more simulation-oriented feel. Aided by the higher resolution of simulation, there is a clearer distinction between price ranges and performance of vehicles. Even on the visual side, there is more nuance; cars sport a metal flake effect squeezed between two layers of paint, waiting to be revealed. Scratches, scrapes, and impacts should have a more dynamic appearance than typical in racers till this point.

ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

The car list for *TDU2* is far from finalised, but staples appropriate for virtual super car collectors have familiar names: Dodge Charger and Viper, Pagani Zonda, McLaren MP4-12C, Spyker C8 and C12, and the Mercedes SLR. Eden and Atari have, to quote, "massive" plans for post-release support with DLC, so one would assume that far more than bikes are in the pipeline.

The features *TDU2* stakes out make a powerful case for the *Test Drive Unlimited* player to return and upgrade; it appears that Eden Games has chosen to walk the straight and narrow path and focus entirely on growing their franchise while insuring that no one is alienated. *Unlimited* had a unique flavour for all its bare threads. By sticking strictly to what worked about it, while expanding on the social side of things, *Unlimited 2* may succeed in attracting those who want to do more online than just tune and race cars in circuits. It is also shaping up into a polished introduction to *Test Drive Unlimited* for those who passed it by last time. **NAG**

Miktar Dracon





Need for Speed World

Live your life a quarter mile at a time

GENRE > MMO Racing

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

WHEN EA ANNOUNCED LAST year that they were going to shake up the *Need for Speed* series with three new titles, there was a lot of hype surrounding the prospect of a *NFS* MMO. Soon after, *Need for Speed World* was announced (alongside *Shift* and the Wii-bound *Nitro*), and now finally we've begun to experience real content for this persistent online racer. The beta program launched recently, and while it is showing a lot of promise, there are a couple of big features that we expected to spot that haven't seen the light of day.

As you might expect, the gameplay in *World* involves players from around the world cruising through a free-roaming city in search of competition or a good old-fashioned car chase. Like in recent *NFS* titles, players can own multiple vehicles and are encouraged to mix them up occasionally to avoid raising the heat level of each vehicle too high. Failure to do so will make any dealings with the police a more difficult task than they would otherwise be. As you race, either against online opponents or the AI (although competing against the latter reduces your rewards to a paltry portion of what they could be), you'll earn cash and reputation points that allow you to gain level and improve a number of skills. The skills system is something quite similar to an MMORPG in the sense that the points you acquire are put into skill slots that form the "build" that separates your character from others. At this time, there are 17 different skills that range



from increased nitro boosts to police detection systems to increased damage dealt during a collision.

When you're not busying yourself at your safe-house, you have a choice between competing in instanced races or open-city exploration. In the exploration mode, you're free to drive around the areas of the city that you've unlocked and either enter races manually by finding their starting point, or cause some trouble with the local boys in blue and rack up some cash by wreaking havoc and (ideally) evading them afterwards. Get caught, however, and it's a slap on the wrist and a big fine for you instead.

World follows the format of recent arcade-focused releases from the *Need*

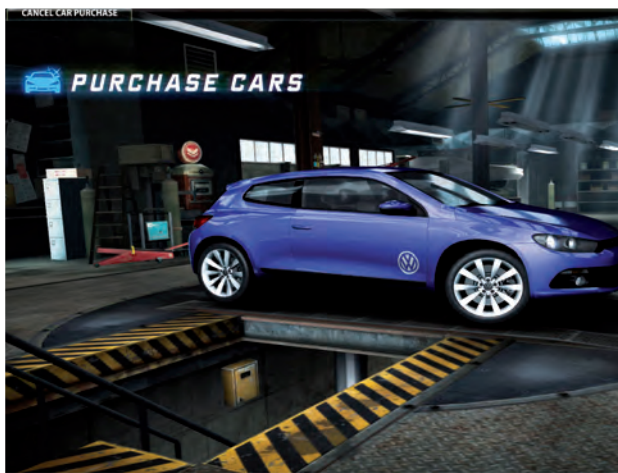
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While the game won't release with any support for guilds, the developers have big plans for co-op systems once the game is off the ground. Players will eventually be able to race in teams, compete for territory and, if rumours are to be believed, even play as the cops.



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The developers are aiming to have more than 70 licensed vehicles available at the time of launch. Each car is rated for top speed, acceleration and handling, and can be accessed by reaching the required reputation level.



"These one-shot special abilities borrow liberally from *NFS's* combat racing cousins and give the player a host of weapons and abilities that can be used during races or pursuits."

for *Speed* stable, which means dumbed-down customisation (at least, from what we've seen so far; things may still change in this department) in lieu of anything that might require just minimal knowledge of how cars work ("Engine make car go vroom. Bigger engine make vroom faster"). The only way you can customise your ride is paintwork or decals, and while those two tools are highly-detailed and allow for some pretty extensive modifications, they're limited to the aesthetic only. If you want your car to be better than someone else's, then you'll have to buy another vehicle; either a different vehicle altogether, or a pre-tuned version of your current model, but that's it.

At this point, you might be thinking "but, why don't I just play a regular, offline *NFS*?" and that's a valid question. Thankfully, those sneaky people at EA Black Box have come up with a great little system that nudges *NFS: World* ever-closer to feeling just like a real MMO. Where other online games have potions and other consumables, *World* has power-ups. These one-shot special abilities borrow liberally from *NFS's* combat racing cousins and give the player a host of weapons and abilities that can be used during races or pursuits. Examples include nitro boost, enhanced shields, enemy-repelling abilities and the ability to re-inflate your tires after they've taken a beating from a police spike strip. If none of the previously-mentioned aspects are enough to entice you, then perhaps the price will be a little more to your liking: it's free. Well, not entirely, but the model that *World* is going to launch with should be enough to convince any racing fan with

a decent Internet connection to at least try the game out. Up until level 10, you'll be able to play at no mandatory cost. The only possible fees you may incur are for the purchase of Boost, a virtual currency that can be used to buy power-ups or rent high-spec vehicles, but from what we've seen so far, it's not necessary to use the power-ups every race, and the chances of you earning power-ups as a bonus reward at the end of each race are pretty decent. If you want to progress past level 10, you'll need to purchase the Starter Pack, which also includes a bit of Boost for you to spend. At this time, there is no mention of a monthly fee, although we can assume that Boost will be used to purchase more than just power-ups or rentals, and could well be the key to acquiring new content as it gets released.

This isn't the first time EA has attempted to develop a persistent online racing title. *Motor City Online* was a similarly great idea, but it was thrown into a relatively immature-but-competitive segment of gaming that was quite simply filled with better games. That, combined with a broadband penetration rate that couldn't sustain such a niche title at the time, saw the end of *Motor City* after just two years of life. We're certain that EA is aware of the mistakes that it's made in the past, concerning both *Motor City* and the less desirable members of the *NFS* family, and we hope that Black Box is committed to keeping *World* the socially engaging, regularly updated game that is necessary for it to stand up to not just its fellow racing titles, but the bad, scary MMO world as a whole.

NAG
Geoff Burrows

What happened between you and that mutant you lost a bet to in Vegas, stays in Vegas, even if you wake up with a ball-gag in your inventory.



Fallout: New Vegas

Come for the mutants, stay for the casinos!

GENRE > Role-playing Shooter
PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

SHOT TWICE IN THE head and left in a shallow grave, you're rescued by a deranged robot and, of course, you have amnesia. Just another day in the wasteland...

There's no lengthy prologue in *Fallout: New Vegas*, no first steps towards daddy, though you'll still get to roll your character, just without the *Baby's First Book* interface. It's straight to business in *New Vegas*, perhaps as it should be. If you've ever had to restart a game in *Fallout 3* or just wanted to try a different tack, the Tunnel Snakes quickly lost their glamour.

OLD YET NEW

The shift in focus for this *Fallout 3* spin-off comes from its new yet familiar development team. Obsidian Entertainment was brought in to create more delicious *Fallout 3*, while the main team from Bethesda continues to swim in all its new-found money. Perhaps they'll buy another developer, so id Software won't get lonely. Interestingly enough, Obsidian is no stranger to *Fallout* – they were the ones who created the franchise. Obsidian was founded in the ashes of Black Isle, by designers and producers who were the leaders on the original *Fallout* series, along with *Icewind Dale* and *Planescape: Torment*. So, the people who created *Fallout*, who sold the rights to Bethesda when Interplay – Black Isle's publisher – went fatal, have been asked to do the spinoff to the *Fallout* series. Lastly, the team that was working on the third *Fallout* game, codenamed Van Buren, at the time when Interplay collapsed, are now the ones working on *New Vegas*.

While the team may be different, the game stays close to the style and template established in *Fallout 3*. Obsidian was tasked with content production, making new story and locations, so little is being changed



graphically. The inhabitants of *New Vegas* are still soulless, wooden mannequins and the visuals look aged and overly familiar. The smell of *Oblivion* still lingers strongly. But, none of that matters, because more *Fallout 3* is always welcome, right?

CITY OF DREAMS

The post-apocalyptic Las Vegas, Nevada, got lucky during the Great War of 2077. It wasn't directly attacked by nukes, so it's mostly in good repair and the locals aren't as mutated. It's decimated, but not broken. There are still hotels and casinos, but it's thematically more like the holiday resort Las Vegas from the 1950s.

New Vegas marks a return to the West Coast where the series originally started, and even revives some old factions like the New Californian Republic. You'll still V.A.T.S. your way around, shooting things in the head or in the hand, depending on which bit is more dangerous at the time, but now there is real interaction between the factions. The player will be able to massage the sociological landscape, which is neatly graphed by the ever-helpful Pip Boy 3000. You can manipulate situations from afar, practice duplicity and really get people thinking it was that other guy that killed their mama and not you (but it was you, and

>> Player companions can now be commanded via a "Companion Wheel" interface. Follow, Stay, Change Attack Stance and Heal are some of the options. It even works on groups of followers, should you suddenly find yourself with an entire town following you into battle. Conversation options between the player and people in *New Vegas* will change more visibly depending on the player's skills, with the morality (Karma) system also coming into play. Dialogue will help raise reputation with certain factions, which can lead to unique events.

it was cruel). The full extent of how you'll be able to play with the politics of *New Vegas* has yet to be fully revealed.

EXPANDED EXPANSION

The size of your new playground is about the same size as the D.C. wasteland, and one wasteland looks like another. *New Vegas* has more glowing neon bits though, thanks to the Helios One concentrated solar power station. The player will be able to get control of Helios One and decide where to send its vital electricity, routing it to the regions of your choice, like the New Vegas strip or the ORBITAL LASER CANNON. Yes, you can nuke towns with it, ala Megaton.

The engine the game is running on may be getting old, but some fresh content and new gameplay options, like Special Attacks with most of the weapons, and an optional Hardcore mode, does sooth them ageing polygons. The Hardcore mode is truly hardcore, you have to maintain hydration when out in the desert, and stimpaks won't heal you instantly. Break your leg, and you'll need a doctor. Also, you can't carry super-human amounts of weapons. Better take one of those new machine guns that use grenades as bullets, called the Grenade Machine Gun. **NAG**

Miktar Dracon



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Quick Hits



SAMURAI WARRIORS 3

Anyone who enjoys the *Dynasty Warriors* series might enjoy *Samurai Warriors 3*. It works on a similar concept: the game modes on offer all see you choosing a character before being dumped into a number of scenarios involving warring clans battling over boring stuff. Each scenario has different objectives to complete. New weaponry, battle bonuses and other items can be collected by killing enemy officers and by completing secondary objectives. As you play you'll earn experience towards levelling up your character, which will improve your stats and unlock new attacks. *Samurai Warriors 3* is essentially a beat-em-up with ridiculous amounts of button mashing. There's some variation thanks to power attacks, special attacks and Musou attacks (really powerful attacks – think magical abilities), but you're going to find yourself simply mashing the A button much more than you'd like. At some point, you're going to realise that the game you're playing is repetitive, feels outdated (in terms of both visuals and gameplay) and simply isn't much fun.

Bottom line: Fun for about 10 minutes, right up until the point where your fingers start burning and your brain stops functioning.



ALIEN BREED: IMPACT

Videogames these days are all about the story – making a connection with the player and gently encouraging them to save the day. In the early '90s, when the first *Alien Breed* was released by *Worms* developers Team 17, nobody cared why they had to kill the aliens – they're aliens! You have a gun! Spelling it out to the players would only serve to insult their intelligence. *Alien Breed: Impact* follows that same basic concept: you're an "engineer" (as we're lead to believe) on board the spaceship Leopold; here's a gun; there's a woman telling you to save the day; why are you still here? Traipse through endless alien-filled corridors and kill things, pick up key-cards, activate security systems and blow up a lot of stuff. It's like the '90s got lucky with Unreal Engine 3 and nine months later we have this little gem.

Bottom line: It's fun, it's repetitive and it's worth the R100-odd it'll cost you on Steam.

Web Scores

How do we measure up? We scour the Net to find out what the rest of the world thinks.

NAG // Metacritic average // Game Rankings average

RED DEAD REDEMPTION



PRINCE OF PERSIA: FORGOTTEN SANDS



BLUR



SPLIT/SECOND: VELOCITY



UFC UNDISPUTED 2010



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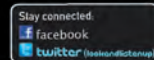
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Look & Listen
For the Fans



Honour among banditos

In the game, you've got tallies for both honour and fame. Fame is self explanatory and increases for pretty much every significant act in the game, whether that is finishing a mission or completing a survivalist challenge. Loads of fame means old ladies and the *Twilight* teens of the Old West will screech, faint and go nuts with excitement at the very sight of you. Honour is essentially your good-and-evil-o-meter, and is pushed either way depending on how you handle the challenges placed before you in the game. Shoot a nun, you're dishonourable. Help her cross the

street, you're honourable. Your honour rating (in conjunction with your fame rating, although a little less so) affects the way the world's inhabitants will treat you. The vagabonds and bandits of Thieves' Landing don't take kindly to do-gooders around their parts, something I learned the hard way when I trotted over to their dodgy little town to play a game of Liar's Dice and mad gunmen (and gunwomen) suddenly and unexpectedly opened unprovoked fire on me. I mean, seriously: even the women grabbed their six shooters. Respect the honour rating people.



Red Dead Redemption

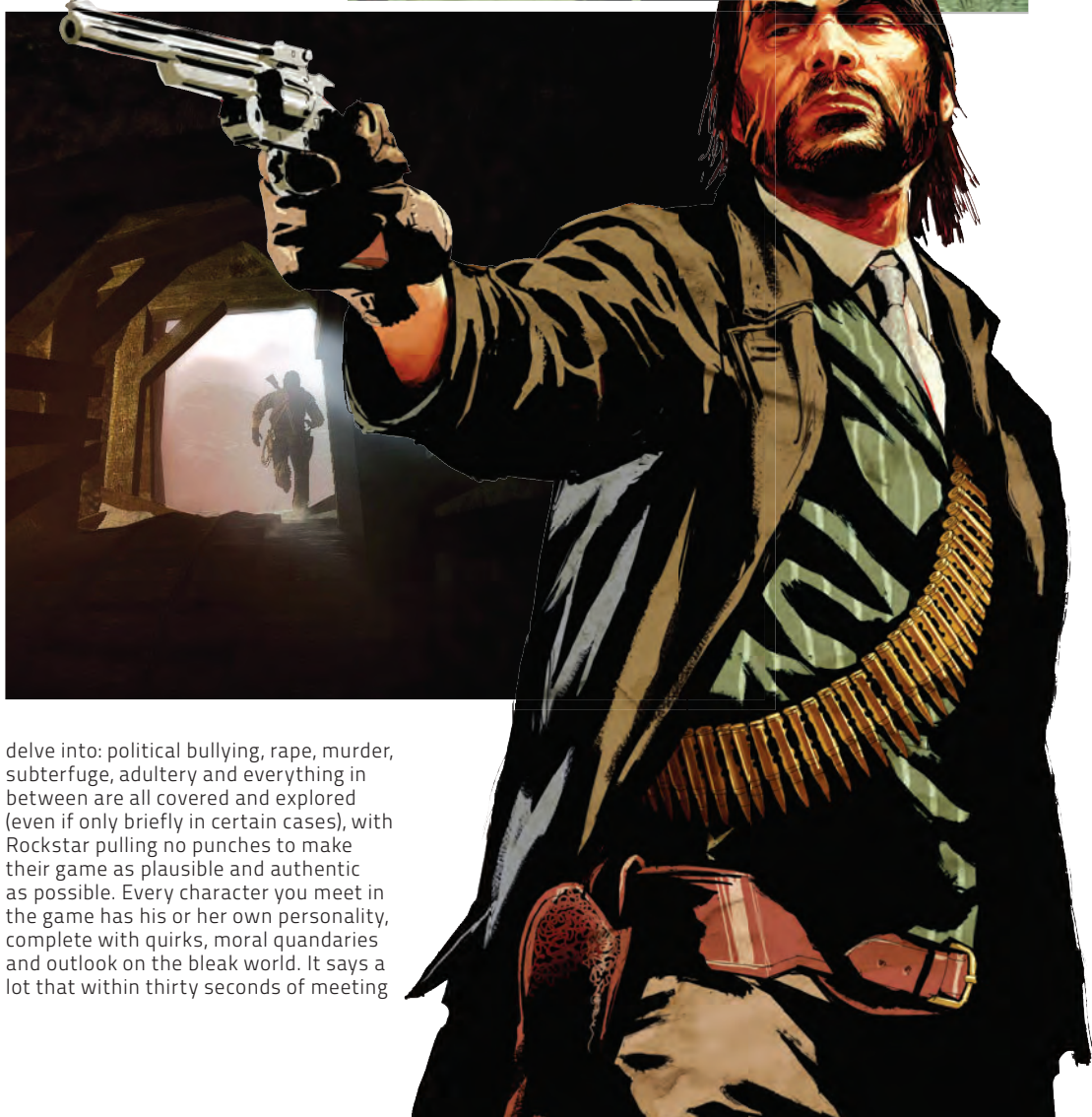
That prostitute stole my horse!

GENRE > Action Adventure/Sandbox

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

TEN MINUTES INTO *RED Dead Redemption*, I knew I was in for something special. A quick, non-interactive train ride at the start of the game was all it took to convince me that something awesome had just begun. Five hours into the game, I'd long since learned the ropes and was unhurriedly unravelling protagonist John Marston's motivation for travelling to Fort Mercer and thereby setting the stage for *Redemption's* grand storyline. By the time I'd hit the fifteen-hour mark, I was so thoroughly enraptured by the game world, its inhabitants and Marston's story that I may as well have bought a cowboy hat, stolen a six shooter and taken up perpetual spitting as a favourite pastime before heading off for a real-world frontier that no longer exists on Earth to herd cattle, break horses, shoot bunnies and, well, spit lots.

The year is 1911, a time when civilisation is closing in on and slowly breaking the untamed West. The gunslingers of old are dead or forgotten, science is encroaching on the natural way of things and governmental interference is inching the once endless horizon ever closer. *Red Dead* is a world of contrast, not just in terms of the usual moral strife that good versus evil entails – it's not so clear cut. Law and lawlessness, civilisation and self governance, freedom and oppression – all of these contrasting concepts are explored. Beneath *Redemption* lies a journey that deals with serious issues. There is no subject too touchy for *Redemption* to



delve into: political bullying, rape, murder, subterfuge, adultery and everything in between are all covered and explored (even if only briefly in certain cases), with Rockstar pulling no punches to make their game as plausible and authentic as possible. Every character you meet in the game has his or her own personality, complete with quirks, moral quandaries and outlook on the bleak world. It says a lot that within thirty seconds of meeting

Second Opinion

This **was** a crap game.

Rewind to last year. *Red Dead Redemption* is in development shambles. The game is terrible. The pieces aren't coming together under RockStar North, who worked on the project even before finishing *Grand Theft Auto IV*. It was looking increasingly likely that *RDR* would be cancelled. RockStar North was in trouble.

Then RockStar San Diego finished *Midnight Club: Los Angeles*. They were brought in to help finish the floundering *RDR*, which had been over-budget and past deadline for almost a year. The crap game became an awesome game. The Wild West open-world sandbox adventure with light role-playing elements sprinkled to taste was saved – in more ways than one. It's clear that *RDR* leans more towards RockStar San Diego's design sensibilities than that of RockStar North. It's far less like *GTA IV* than one would imagine, and all the more appealing as a result.

The world is painted with large brush strokes, sculpting the remarkably varied terrain beautifully, while random placement of fauna and flora roughs it out for a truly natural feel. Events, both scripted and random, along with parlour games and side-missions, all fit perfectly into the theme and environment, without that jarring

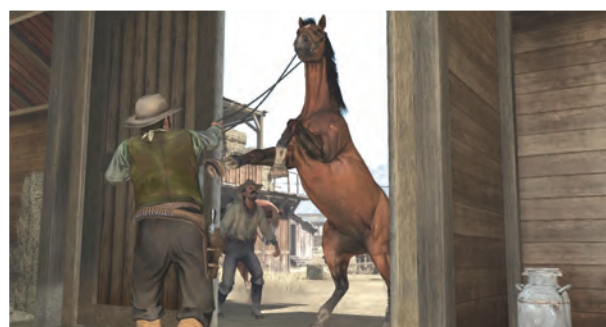
self-mocking cartoon irony that *GTA IV* goes for. *RDR* is genre-aware in its setting, playing it straight to the benefit thereof. Occasionally a horse may ramp an incline as if having four-wheel drive. It breaks suspension of disbelief, but does give humorous insight into the legacy car-physics code driving the beasts. Some narrative flow issues creep in with characters referring to missions you've yet to do as if you already have. Random glitches may intrude into the universe; beware giant 100 metre-tall demon horses.

But overall, the single-player experience is one of exploration, distraction, involvement and enjoyment. Every game of chance is well-designed, towns feel lively though still wooden (pun intended), while gunplay and cover-to-cover combat is far more competent than anything RockStar has done before. The multi-player (cooperative missions coming soon) inherits the *Burnout Paradise/Midnight Club: Los Angeles* model of free-roaming, with focused missions/game types when you initiate them. The next *GTA* should be done by RockStar San Diego.

Miktar Dracon

BOTTOM LINE: The best game from the Rockstar label in a very long time

80



Magic moments

Anyone who's played a *Grand Theft Auto* title knows about those crazy, one time only events that always seem to happen in Rockstar-developed games. Every *GTA* lover has those stories where they'll barge in on a whimsical conversation and go, "This one time, in *GTA III*, I drove into a hooker and her leg somehow got trapped in the windshield as she rolled over the car. So I drove for a few miles as she flopped about, helplessly screaming as I drove into lampposts and construction workers. Then I launched off a ramp at a 45-degree angle and the car barrel-rolled a few times, hooker on windshield and all, before crash landing on its roof. So the hooker detaches, flies into a tree and, on impact, a baby ejects from her happy bits." Or something like that. These moments are the most bizarre, often most hilarious flashes of madness that you're likely to find in any game, making every gamer's experience oddly unique when they occur. They're affectionately known as "Rockstar Roulette." Well, not really, but here's hoping that people will start calling it that. *RDR* is not without these bizarre, often accidental occurrences, with reports of bodies falling to the ground from thousands of feet in the air for no reason, horses getting trapped inside the ground yet still galloping intently and of course, the planned, intentional wackiness like hookers stealing your horse from under you. I've spoken to numerous people and each of them already has wild tales of hilarity from *RDR*.

Second Opinion

If variety is the spice of life, then in the world of video games, *Red Dead Redemption* is the red-hot tamale, stuffed with haba ero chilli peppers, coated in Tabasco sauce, dipped in petrol, and then lit on fire. There are just so many different things to do in this game between the storyline missions, side-quests and mini games, it's nearly impossible to become bored.

In one two-hour session of *Red Dead*, I played a handful of story missions that had me herding cattle, lassoing and breaking wild horses, driving a stagecoach whilst being attacked by bandits, and leading a full-on assault on an outlaw hideout. And that's just a small taste of what the main missions in the game involve. There are other missions that involve horse races and shooting exhibitions, train robberies and pistol duels.

All that alone would make for a pretty ambitious, exciting game, but there's more. There are also more than a dozen random-encounter missions, where a stranger will ask you to do a favour for them such as hunt down a missing relative or catch an escaping thief. You'll happen

across these side quests as you ride your horse across from town to town. (There is a fast-travel system, but generally you'll want to avoid using it because the journey truly is half the fun in *Red Dead Redemption*).

And then there are dozens of activities and mini games you can engage in just in case all the other stuff wasn't enough. My personal favourite is playing Texas Hold 'em poker in various back rooms of saloons and general stores. The AI isn't fantastic, but it's not horrible either, and with the investment of a little time, you can make quite a bit of money if you know how to play. Some of the other things you can do include (but aren't limited to) arm wrestling, bounty hunting, drinking, playing blackjack, throwing horseshoes, hunting animals, searching for treasure and cracking safes.

Chris Bistline

BOTTOM LINE: You'd have to be dead not to find something fun to do in this game.

92



anyone new in the game, you'll know whether you like them or not and if you'll be able to tolerate their chosen path through life, or at least sympathise with them. Even the secondary, non-pivotal characters manage to be wholly interesting and the majority of the missions and side-quests that characters send you on are varied and exciting.

Arguably the most important part of any sandbox game is the world you find yourself in, and *Redemption's* sets the bar high for future open-world games. It obviously shares many similarities with *Grand Theft Auto* (you can buy houses, there are numerous mini games and even the radar/map system is similar), but this is more than just *GTA* with horses and cowpokes. There is beauty in the bleak, desolate lands that the game places you in. It's all so painstakingly detailed that you can almost taste the dust kicked up by passing stagecoaches and smell that earthy, manure-ridden stench of the ranches you trot by on your horse. This world is barren, yet teeming with life and opportunity. Wild animals like coyotes, bears and armadillos roam the prairies and hills. Caravans filled with valuable goods warily rumble along the weather-



beaten paths. People on horseback sporadically gallop by, occasionally cussing in your direction or shouting split-second pleasantries before becoming specks on the horizon once more. You could quite easily lose yourself in the world for hours without ever completing an actual mission, instead spending the time hunting animals for the valuable pelts, meat or other commodities that they provide, or playing Liar's Dice in the saloon in Thieves' Landing.

The flawless presentation of the game world, the absolutely captivating story and the smooth cover-and-shoot gameplay covers up any little bugs and visual niggles that crop up occasionally during an otherwise immaculate experience. It's a truly thrilling and riveting adventure that is offered by *Redemption*, one which every gamer should have the pleasure of playing through. Mention must be made of the game's soundtrack, with music that is masterfully distributed throughout the game and only kicks in at the most pivotal, emotionally relevant moments. Visually it is one of the most extraordinary sandbox games out there, with audio that pulls you into the game world and is always appropriate for the setting.

Ten minutes into *Red Dead Redemption*, I knew I was in for something special. By the time I reached the end of the shockingly believable, frighteningly human tale told by the game, I knew I'd just completed one of the greatest games of all time.

NAG
Dane Remendes

THE SCORE

18
www.pegi.info

1

2-16

N/A

ED'S CHOICE

>Plus

- + Gripping story
- + Wonderfully detailed world
- + Phenomenal soundtrack

>Minus

- Nothing important really

Look & Listen
For the Future

>Bottom Line

Red Dead Redemption is utterly breathtaking. Rockstar have proven once again that they are masters of game development.

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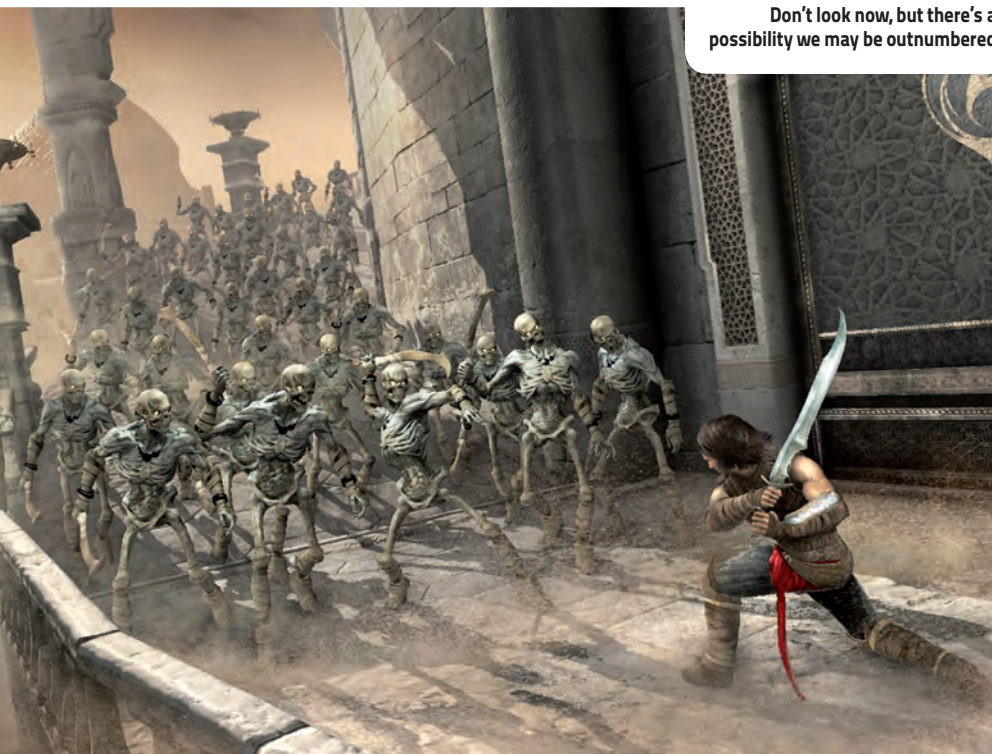
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Don't look now, but there's a possibility we may be outnumbered



Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands

Like sands through the hourglass... Yeah, we went there.

GENRE > Action Platform

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

WHEN PRINCE OF PERSIA: *The Sands of Time* was released back in 2003, it was something special. As the Prince's (the character's name is never revealed, and therefore the world deems it necessary to capitalise the word Prince when referring to the titular hero) first journey beyond Jordan Mechner's original 2D creation and into the world of 3D (we don't really count 1999's *Prince of Persia 3D* in this equation, because we don't want to), the game sort of came out of nowhere and surprised everyone, not just because it was good, but because it was truly, absolutely amazing. In our opinion, it easily stands as one of the greatest games ever created. In the years that followed, the game received two sequels (*Warrior Within* and *Two Thrones*, the latter of which concluded the *Sands of Time* storyline) and the series was once again rebooted by 2008's *Prince of Persia* (the one with Elika and in which the developers thought it'd be a good idea for players to not be able to die or screw up terribly). However, with the recent release of the movie starring Jake Gyllenhaal and based on the *Sands of Time* storyline, Ubisoft has seen fit to jump back to the beloved *Sands of Time* universe so that they can join in on all the money-making potential of the movie.

This is where *The Forgotten Sands* comes into play, acting as an interquel (apparently that's a real word) that details the events that transpired during the seven-year gap between *Sands of Time* and *Warrior Within*. The Prince has made his way back to his brother's (an angry Persian dude named Malik) kingdom, only to find that it is



besieged by other angry Persian dudes with swords. In desperation, the brothers release a fabled army that works a little too well and doesn't only repel the invading force, but transforms all of the kingdom's inhabitants (save for the Prince and Malik) into sandy statues. The army then continues to grow exponentially and the Prince is informed by a djinn that it will grow to envelop the entire world if he does not stop it. That's all well and good, but it's from here that things already start smelling a bit strange, like fish that's been left out of the freezer for too long and is starting to support its own alarmingly complex ecosystem. One of the greatest things about *Sands of Time*

>>

This review covers the 360, PS3 and PC version of the game. The Wii, DS and PSP versions were developed by separate studios and will feature different gameplay elements and storylines. We've heard there's wobble in the Wii version, 2.5D side-scrolling platform action in the PSP version and touch-screen support in the DS version. Isn't that exciting?

was its captivating story, something which *The Forgotten Sands* is lacking. The story isn't terrible, but it's just... very boring. You'll also notice from the moment that you take control of the Prince for the first time that he's not the same Prince we know. He's slower and not as lithe and nimble as we remember. His movements are smoother and the animations (which are superbly fluid) have been enhanced, but that doesn't matter when this Prince might as well be wading through yoghurt in comparison to the Prince we journeyed with in *Sands of Time*. This is particularly noticeable in combat, which is more sluggish and limited. The Prince no longer darts from enemy to enemy with



Prince of Shiny Upgrades

Killing enemies in the game earns you experience. Earn enough experience and you'll earn an Upgrade Point. These Upgrade Points can be spent on purchasing new powers and improving existing ones, together with augmenting the Prince's stats and abilities.

Your health bar can be made longer and you can buy more slots in which to store energy, for example, while spending points elsewhere will increase the damage of the Prince's attacks. It's a nice addition, but we really wish there was an upgrade to make the Prince move faster.



energy (which you only have a limited amount of), however, and that energy can only be replenished by collecting blue orbs dropped by enemies and hidden in destructible vases around the environment. Aside from the wonderfully elaborate platform (which is really the focus of this title) and acrobatic action, there are the game's visuals and audio. Not only is the audio as brilliant and fitting as it has always been throughout the series, but the game's visuals benefit greatly from the power of today's consoles and PCs. The environments look amazing, even the ones covered in drab browns and earthy colours.

All you really need to take from this review is that *The Forgotten Sands* is a good game in its own right and it features all the intense platform and adventure elements that the series is known for (it's even gone back to a system that is - thankfully - much less forgiving than 2008's reboot). If you go in expecting the same magic that we first experienced in *The Sands of Time*, however, you're going to walk away a bit disappointed. **NAG**

Dane Remendes



terrifying, graceful speed, is unable to block and counter and, although the number of enemies onscreen has been increased, combat feels much more repetitive and mindless than before.

For all its flaws (and we do admit that our love for *Sands of Time* has placed unreasonably high expectations on this game), *The Forgotten Sands* is still a fantastic game. The combat gets repetitive, but the platform and environmental puzzles are ingeniously brilliant and require very precise timing and forethought. The Prince may have returned the Dagger of Time to Farah at the end of *Sands of Time*, but he's once again granted the power to rewind time and undo recent mistakes for this title. What makes this more interesting is the introduction of elemental powers, like the ability to control the flow of water. This means that jets of water can be made solid, creating new paths for the Prince to move along. Water spraying from walls, for example, can be solidified and used as bars from which the Prince can swing. Small waterfalls can be turned into solid walls along which the Prince can run to reach new areas. There are also four combat-centric minor powers that can be activated using the D-pad, such as one which leaves a trail of flame behind the Prince that damages enemies it touches. Rewinding time and using these minor powers uses

THE SCORE



>Plus

- + Cool environmental puzzles
- + Fluid animation
- + Great visuals and audio

>Minus

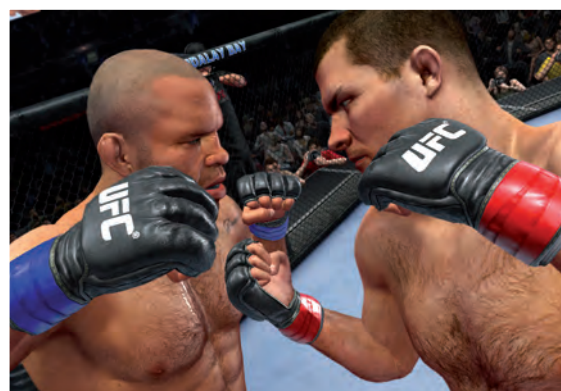
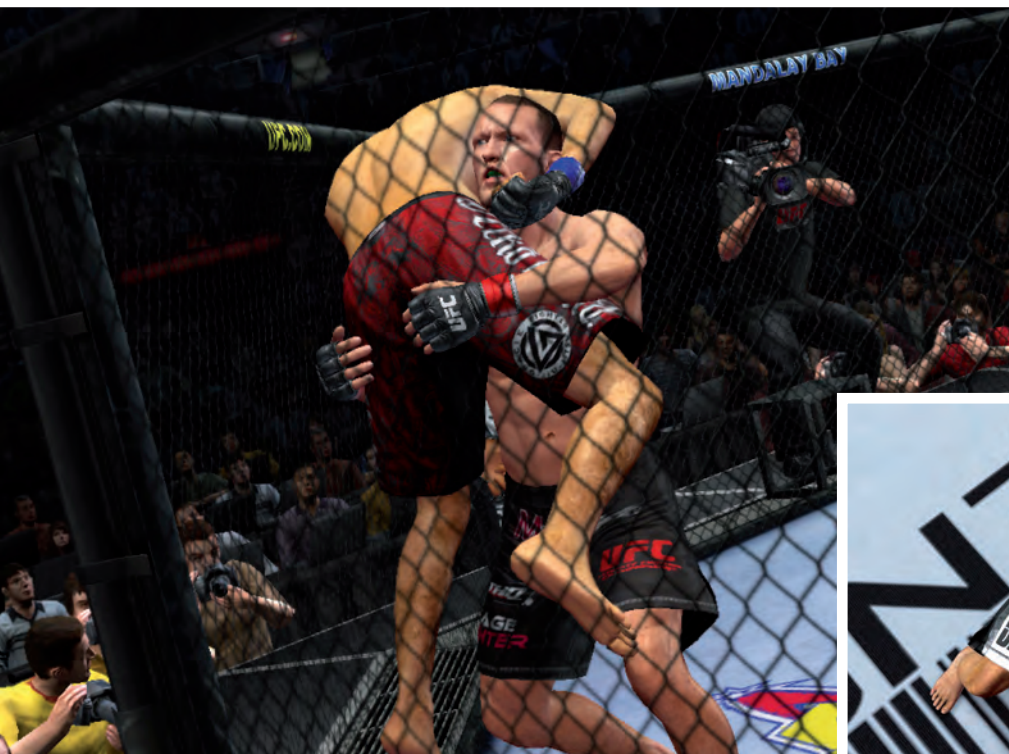
- It's not *Sands of Time*
- Simplified, repetitive combat

>Bottom Line

The Forgotten Sands is a highly polished, very good game. Despite all its flair and polish, however, it just can't live up to its legacy.

Look Listen
For the Future

80



UFC Undisputed 2010

A winner by knockout, or has this year's UFC title submitted to mediocrity?

GENRE > Fighting

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

THQ'S FIRST FORAY INTO mixed martial arts was a runaway success, and it's no wonder that this year's iteration of the *UFC Undisputed* franchise has some very high expectations to live up to. This year's title, however, is more of a refinement of its predecessor, rather than a complete overhaul – so much so, that at first glance, you might struggle to tell the two games apart. Of course, as you spend more time playing the new title, the differences become apparent, and although none of the changes are entirely revolutionary, the game dynamic has been subtly tweaked, altered and expanded to make for a grippingly realistic interpretation of mixed martial arts competition.

Boasting an expansive roster of more than 100 fighters, spanning five weight divisions from lightweight all the way to heavyweight, *Undisputed 2010* is certainly not short of content. In addition to a tutorial that lays out the fundamentals of playing, the game offers a number of modes, including rudimentary exhibition matches, title defence matches (somewhat akin to a survival match, pitting you against a string of opponents, one after the other), an event mode that lets you set up Pay-Per-View cards, or play through downloaded ones, as well as a career mode that's seen some improvements made over last year's offering. In addition to all that, the Ultimate Fights mode returns, allowing you to play through historic UFC match-ups and rewarding you with unlockable content for your trouble.

Of course, one of the biggest draws to last year's *UFC* release was the option of creating your own combatant and guiding

him up through the UFC ranks, and this is where *Undisputed 2010* has made some of its most significant changes. As you progress through your career, you'll book fights against a variety of opponents, and you'll have the time in between your fights to advance your character's skills and statistics in preparation for your upcoming match. The difference this year is that instead of selecting a fighting style for your character, which would determine which special moves and techniques he's able to perform, you can choose exactly which moves to add to your repertoire by participating in training camps. Each camp offers a variety of moves that you can learn – after picking your desired technique from a menu, you'll engage in a sparring session where you have to fulfil certain objectives in order to gain points. Once you've accrued sufficient points, the technique is then added to your fighter's move-set. It can be tedious to pick through all the associated menus to find exactly the move you're looking for, but on the whole it does allow a much greater degree of personalisation for custom characters than last year's instalment did, and that's a welcome change.

The game dynamic is unchanged from last year's title, at least as far as the basics are concerned: striking attacks are still mapped to the face buttons, with the shoulder buttons being used for blocks and parries, whilst the right analog stick controls takedowns, clinches and grappling. What has changed, however, is that the game now lets you back your opponent up against the cage, leaving him in a very disadvantageous position, and open to new attacks and takedowns. There's also a new sway system in place, allowing you to swing your character's upper body around in an effort to evade your opponent's strikes, and



Hey guess what I did last night, smell my hand!



hopefully gain an opportunity to deliver a damaging counter-attack. The submission system has also been subtly reworked – you're now able to convert one submission hold into another in an attempt to catch your opponent off-guard and hopefully achieve a victory by tap-out. You now also have the option of either slowly grinding a submission into place by rotating the right stick, or "charging" it by holding one of the shoulder buttons and then releasing it in a last-ditch attempt to lock a submission hold in. The entire ground grappling system has been revised, in fact, making fighting on the ground a deeper and more strategic affair than it was in last year's game.

Despite the number of small improvements that have been made in *UFC Undisputed 2010*, there are still some areas that are unfortunately left lacking. Graphically, the game has made little improvement over last year's release. Fighters are still very well-detailed, particularly in the way that they show damage during a fight, but in the post match cut-scenes, the animations are stilted and far from being lifelike. The commentary of Joe Rogan and Mike Goldberg quickly becomes tedious, and is often unhelpful – for example, the duo will often remark that "the cut above his left eye is dangerously close to stopping this fight" when both fighters are covered in blood, leaving you to wonder exactly which combatant they're referring to. The career mode once again suffers from the "menu overload" that

plagued last year's title – the process of training or accepting sponsorships involves the tedious navigation of many nested menus, much to the player's frustration. The create-a-fighter mode, for all the freedom it offers, could also stand to be a bit more user-friendly. Although you're able to individually alter all aspects of your fighter's face, it's usually through a series of slider bars that are labelled only as "x", "y", or "z", leaving you to first figure out what each bar does before you can meaningfully adjust it.

UFC Undisputed 2010 is certainly a refinement over its predecessor, offering a number of tweaks and changes that make for an altogether more immersive and realistic experience. It's a shame that some of the glaring flaws of the series have yet to be addressed, however. UFC devotees who adored last year's title will find little not to like with this year's release, and PS3 owners are in for an extra treat, as their version boasts three exclusive fighters, and five exclusive ultimate fight bouts, as well as full-HD videos of some classic UFC matchups. There's no doubt that *UFC 2010* is a step forward for the series, it's just a little disappointing it isn't a bigger one. **NAG**

Adam Liebman

THE SCORE

16

www.pegi.info

1-2

2

N/A

Look Listen

For the Fans

>Plus

- + Vast roster
- + Deep game dynamic
- + Exclusive bonus content

>Minus

- Steep learning curve
- Not vastly different to last year's

>Bottom Line

Less of a true sequel than a refinement of last year's game, *UFC Undisputed 2010* might not be perfect, but it's still a blast to play.

79

"Aim for the orange bits" has never been easier.



Lost Planet 2

Remind me why we're here again...

GENRE > Action

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

IF YOU ARE OLD enough to have experienced the wonders of arcade gaming in the '90s, you'll no-doubt remember this entertainment heyday of shoot 'em ups and beat 'em ups having one distinct factor: additive simplicity. These games were uncomplicated and repetitive; the gameplay was usually limited to a handful of mechanics, and when you ran out of lives you either had to cough up another 50c piece or go home defeated. Aside from the mountains of entertaining retro or retro-themed games lining the shelves of online distributors, gaming has evolved since those days. Games have become more complicated, more intricate and offer players more to do. Apparently, the developers of *Lost Planet 2* didn't get that memo.

Simplicity can work for certain games: "there are some bad guys, go kill them and we'll give you a reward," is a fine premise for games that have an interesting combat mechanic or story to back it up. *Lost Planet 2* has neither.

Things kick off ten years after the events of the first *Lost Planet*. The planet E.D.N. III – which doesn't seem to offer anything to its inhabitants other than a source of T-Energy, which is consumed by simply hanging around – has warmed up enough to allow a few isolated pockets of forest to poke through the icy wastelands. In these lush landscapes, there are lots of big scary monsters filled with T-ENG. For some reason, you need to kill these monsters and some other people on the planet, but the reason as to why exactly you should bother is never made terribly clear. So, just like the good soldier boy or girl you're playing as, you arm up, rush in and complete objectives handed to you by a disembodied voice. You'll have to battle

Jungle Pirates (*LP2*'s updated version of the Snow Pirate), blow up things and kill people/monsters/plant life all because your target reticule changes to red when you hover it over them; and red is obviously bad.

The monsters that you'll battle are called Akrid, E.D.N. III's natural inhabitants, and they come in a variety of sizes and levels of danger. The biggest foes, any Category-G Akrid, act as end-of-episode bosses that take ages to bring down. The process of which is fairly entertaining, but these battles don't come frequently enough to give you too much reason to keep playing. All of the Akrid can be dealt with by shooting at various weak points demarcated by a bright orange glow, such as limbs, tentacles or various bumps. Dealing with both the Akrid and the Jungle Pirates requires very little tactical ability: most foes can be despatched by standing in front of them and simply emptying your clip in their direction until they die. The enemy AI is static and dull, and seldom gives you any reason to attempt any form of strategy. As for your squad AI, they're not far ahead, which leads to perhaps the biggest flaw in *LP2*.

Right from the first menu screen you see, it's clear that *Lost Planet 2* has been designed as a multiplayer experience above all else. All of the menus, selection screens and confirmation screens (of which there are in abundance) have slots for additional players, and the campaign itself is handled in a modular way (think *Left 4 Dead*) which detracts from any sort of immersion you'd be lucky to experience. Of course, all of these design flaws would be forgiven if the game managed to rustle up a half-decent multiplayer experience, but even with other players controlling the bodies of your squad mates, nothing will stop the game itself from being incredibly linear with dead-boring combat. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE

16

www.pegi.info

1-2

2-4

2-4

Look & Listen

For the Fun

>Plus

- + Looks alright
- + Mechs and big guns

>Minus

- Boring combat
- Weak single player
- Uninspiring story

>Bottom Line

If *Metal Slug* had a baby with *Gears of War*, and dropped it on its head, you'd be close to understanding *Lost Planet 2*.

55



StarCraft 2
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For the Fans



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Blur

Say hello to powered-up racing...

GENRE > Powered-up Racing

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

STOP. DON'T READ THIS review now. Put the magazine away with a note on it saying "read *Blur* review in 2020". The following text will make much more sense then.

BLUR RETROSPECTIVE

In 2010, the "powered-up racing" genre was truly born.

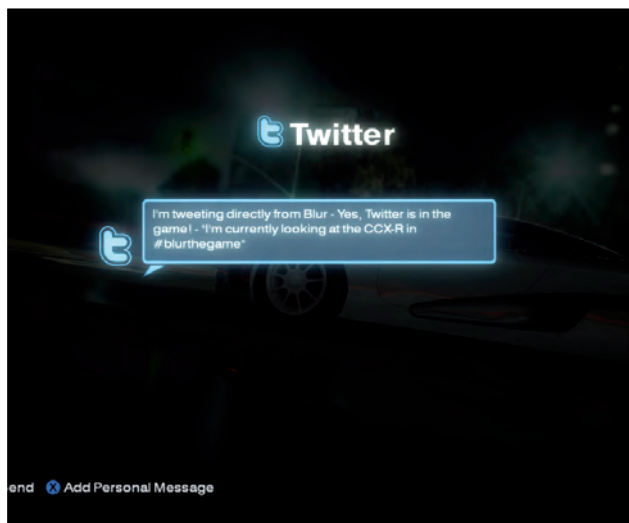
Before *Blur*, powered-up racing was either of the cartoony go-kart variety with animal parts and food used as weapons, or of the hardcore science-fiction quasi-realistic anti-gravity racing variety. Older attempts, such as *Hi-Octane* from Bullfrog (who later sold their souls to become Lionhead), showed the promise of the genre, though it would take the 22 million unit sales of *Mario Kart Wii* to make publishers finally sit up and take notice. They realised, people want this stuff, and they don't care what kind of package it comes in.

So in 2010, the explosion of attempts at cashing in on this untapped market resulted in many clones, contenders and innovators. *ModNation Racers*, for example, took the high road by having a serious racing model on their Mario Karts, involved car-to-car combat and tricky weaponry. Its customisation: easy building of tracks, editing of carts and Munny doll inspired characters, gave it legs. On the flip side, *SEGA All-Stars Racing* stuck as closely to the *Mario Kart* racing model as possible, innovating only slightly in how it applied its character-specific super moves. Before either of them, *Full Auto* made a valiant attempt at pulling *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* style time-bending into the mix,

and even managed a sequel in spite of a lukewarm reception.

The real game-changer however was *Blur*. It exploded on to the scene with a fresh gutsy Urban Electronic Punk stylisation and aesthetic that defied the fledgling genre. It showed, in spirit, what racing would be like in *The Matrix*, and wasn't afraid to bring it all together with a sophisticated racing model, and strategic offensive/defensive over-the-top power-ups that the untrained eye may have easily compared to *Mario Kart*, but were in hindsight far more in line with the *Wipeout* model. Where early reviews of the time tried to ignorantly paint *Blur* as the "bridge between casual (meaning *Mario Kart*) and hardcore (meaning anything not Nintendo)", it took a few years before people realised nothing could be further from the truth. *Blur* was, as they put it back then, "Serious Business".





SERIOUS BUSINESS

When it launched, initial sales of *Blur* bordered on the catastrophic. It just wasn't selling. Partly due to hot competition from a far shallower yet more titillating counterpart, *Split/Second*. Partly because fans of Bizarre Creations wanted a new *PGR*, and not the "not serious" *Blur* and partly because initial reviews painted the game (unknowingly) in an unfavourable light. Online, the fan base was split between three platforms, making finding a full server more difficult than it should have been.

After a while, word of mouth did the trick, as people stopped asking "why *should* I play this game?" and started asking instead, "why do I *want* to play this game?" Asking the right question, brought the right answer that still holds true even today – because regardless of its technical merits or how the bullet points of its features stacked up to "comparable products", *Blur* was a game that you want to *experience* to understand when things changed in the racing genre. To see for yourself what new ideas were introduced – ideas whose absence you would find unacceptable in any other racer.

NEW IDEAS

Originally, *Blur* had a Facebook (remember that?) parody inside its universe, sardonically titled "Racebook". It was to be the core hub of the game, where virtual friends and rivals would challenge you to races and post screenshots of their takedowns of you on their profiles. That entire concept was scrapped, but many of its functions and features, like the ability to set up a "beat that" challenge on a race you just completed and send that to a friend, remained – but instead of virtual friends,



you use your real ones.

The core game progression remained quaint and stoic: winning races gained you Lights and Fans, the former unlocking more events with the latter unlocking new cars. Each tier punctuated in a battle against an A.I. racer in a unique car (once you met his or her conditions, such as gaining enough fans, or wrecking enough opponents). Beat them, and you got their car to use in multiplayer as well. An undervalued function in the single-player was the Rival setting that could list one of your friends also playing the game as a nemesis, his rankings on single-player levels competing directly with yours so as to "own" an event. Complete any event and you could post a boast to your friends list, Twitter or Facebook actual.

RACING STRIPES

Races themselves, in real-world locations that Bizarre Creations became known for with their *PGR* series, are a whole article in themselves. What mattered at the end of the day, according to fans, was that the various power-ups were balanced, the cars a joy to drive (especially at the higher speed classes) and the tracks, with their non-random power-up placement, lent themselves to true strategy and tactics. To quote sage Tycho Brahe of that era, "every lap is an exercise in strategic dynamism".

Taking the action online brought with it the rank-up dynamics popularised by *Modern Warfare*, pioneered in *Battlefield 2*. Participation brings fans, equating to experience, which unlock new cars and modifications. Modifications change/boost things, the three you pick able to turn the tide of battle when called upon. The Ram modification lets you plough into opponents and do damage, the Laser Sight is perfect for long-range Bolt shots, the Silent Running modification cloaks you until you fire your first shot or get damaged, to name a few. Twenty-car races, day-glow neon homing balls of electricity flying everywhere, are pure chaos akin to a giant free-for-all game of *Quake 3*. Simply not being last, became an achievement all its own.

BIZARRE RELATIONS

Even as its popularity slowly grew, the game suffered from issues, mostly related to the online portion: server crashes, game freezes, strange errors that would cut out all sound except sub-sonic, and other sharp edges that quickly cut even its most fervent supporters. Bizarre Creations responded to these issues, by <ERROR: REST OF DOCUMENT NOT FOUND> **NAG** Miktar Dracon

THE SCORE



>Plus
 + Innovative concepts
 + Pretty to look at
 + Lovely to play

>Minus
 - Some bugs
 - Rather ordinary single-player campaign

Look Listen
 For the Fans

>Bottom Line

If the end of the review confuses you, it's because Bizarre hasn't released a patch yet. High-concept, we know.

87



Split/Second: Velocity

One trick pony

GENRE > Arcade racing

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

WITH THE *NEED FOR Speed* series left to wander around on its own in the middle of the night, and the *Burnout* series desperately trying to outdo itself with every release, there's an increasingly large gap at the head of the arcade racer leaderboard that a number of titles have attempted to fill in recent months. This latest offering from Black Rock Studio, the team that brought us *Pure* and both *Moto GP '06* and *'07*, is an interesting take on the crash racer side of this genre, but is it enough to take the crown as the arcade racing title of 2010?

Split/Second (or *Split Second*, or however it's written; the game offers a few varieties of its own title before it's even finished installing) puts the player into a fictional TV show that pits racers against each other in a blood sport-like racing environment. But, instead of flinging deadly projectiles (or themselves) at one another, the racers activate traps along the raceway with the intent to inhibit or temporarily destroy their opponents. These traps vary in both deadliness and delivery, depending on which racing environment you compete in (mostly urban, but there are also industrial settings like causeways, a dock, an airport and similar locations) and include helicopters that are poised to drop explosive barrels, bridges and buildings that collapse, trucks that back out of alleyways and cranes that swing their heavy payload right across the raceway. In order to activate these traps, called Power Plays, players must build up their PP meter by drafting behind opponents, drifting around corners, scoring hang time



from ramps and narrowly missing Power Plays that have been deployed against them. The result, especially when you're competing against human players or the tougher AI opponents, is a chaotic battle to the finish line in a racing environment that is literally falling apart around you. It makes the action particularly entertaining if you're trailing the pack, as there's almost always a bright, explosive spectacle occurring just a few hundred metres ahead of you, usually at your hand. Think of Michael Bay and those ridiculous, over-the-top car chase scenes in films, and you're on the right

track. In fact, we're pretty sure that if the developers could get away with having a giant robot that smashes its way through the city while you race between its legs, they would. Perhaps there's room in the DLC; we'll drop them a mail.

To continue the TV show concept, races are divided into seasons, which in turn have a number of episodes that you'll compete in. As you progress through the episodes, you'll earn credits that unlock new (unlicensed) vehicles, but that's about it; there is no customisation other than choosing a few decals or paint-job, and you don't even have



to choose between vehicles, as they're all simply given to you. Before each episode, you're greeted with a super-cheesy "in today's exciting episode" video montage of exploding cars and trains that derail and all that sort of nonsense, complete with shards of glass flying past the camera and fires burning in the background. The presentation of everything, from the menu system to the in-race HUD (which is a tiny little thing that sits below your car's bumper; there isn't even a mini-map), is impeccable, and really enhances the delightful cheese-factor. With that said, you'd be forgiven for thinking that

the action itself is over-the-top, and aside from having an obvious case of exploding trucks, *Split/Second* behaves like a very solid, almost disappointingly-acceptable arcade racer. Sure, you can drift like crazy around corners, and the vehicles can take silly amounts of damage sometimes, but if you strip away all the frills and fuss, you're left with a racer that performs well, and feels good in terms of vehicle physics, but otherwise doesn't do too much to keep you entertained. If you've managed to cruise to the front of the pack in the regular race mode, generally staying at least one corner out of sight of the vehicle behind you is enough to avoid any incoming Power Plays. What you're left with is a bit boring compared to the excitement it took you to get that far ahead. There isn't even any sort of nitro boost to keep things interesting. However, taking to the streets against human opponents is sure to bring you a better challenge, and the episode finales, called Elite Races, pump up the computer AI to a level that is sure to offer you a challenge.

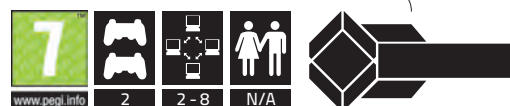
Simple race modes would then surely doom this title, and thankfully Black Rock as included a few others to spice things up. Aside from Race and Elimination, the latter of which has become standard fare in the last few years of arcade racing titles, there are four additional modes to test your abilities, however only one of them uses the Power Plays, which is a bit of a waste. Survival Mode sees you racing against a number of 18-wheel articulated trucks that drop explosive barrels at anyone who tries to overtake them. Casting all logic aside, then, it's your goal to do exactly that. The further you climb up the ranks, the more points you'll score, which will ultimately place you once you've run out of lives. Air Strike is perhaps the most interesting of the non-standard modes. In this, you'll race through a track while a military-grade attack helicopter rains missiles around you. The faster you drive, the more difficult it is for the missile salvos to lock on, but the tougher it becomes to

maintain control and avoid the increasingly-frequent bombardment. If you get hit directly three times, you're out. Air Revenge is similar, and feels like a bit of a last-minute attempt to fluff up the game; the same premise exists, except this time your performance against the missiles increases a power bar. Get the bar all the way up and you'll be able to mark the incoming missiles "return to sender," wash, rinse and repeat until the chopper is down. The final mode takes the ridiculous chase mode idea to its limit; Detonator will see you race through a track while Power Plays activate automatically whenever you pass near them, which makes for an intense driving experience.

For all the cool, exciting explosions that *Split/Second* lumps on top of an otherwise merely decent arcade racer, one can't help but feel like the game could have done with more real content. It certainly is fun for a while and definitely suited for multiplayer, but once all the fires have died down and you've seen every Power Play activated (which isn't too much of a challenge, given the lack of tracks - however high their quality may be), you might be left feeling a little disappointed. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE



>Plus

- + Great level design
- + Fun multiplayer

>Minus

- Not enough tracks
- No staying-power

Look & Listen
for the Fun

>Bottom Line

Good fun for a bit, but fails to deliver a decent long-term experience.

75

"Remember, cute and cuddly boys"



Play. Create. Race

Customisation is user-friendly but amazingly versatile. You layer colours, stickers and materials over your Mods and their cars, and plug on 3D shapes and props to alter body parts and features. Creating new tracks is very easy; simply drive a steam-roller vehicle that spits out the track behind it. Naturally, you're free to pick your aesthetic style (medieval, jungle, etc) and you have full control over what scenery goes where. Alternatively, for those who couldn't be bothered, the auto-populate button will do that all for you. A similar feature exists for Mod and car customisation should you have no desire to fanny about making a driver that looks like the Arbitrator – which, incidentally, is entirely possible. Awesome.



ModNation Racers

LittleMarioBigKartRacerPlanet... Thing

GENRE > Arcade Racer

PC 360 **PS3** Wii PS2 **PSP** DS

UNITED FRONT GAMES HAS some clever people working for them. Said clever people have created a game centred on user-generated content. They've spliced that to a successful genre that appeals to a broad audience because it's accessible and intended for casual multiplayer: kart-racing. The result is a genre bolstered by a concept that fosters a sense of community (that's the user-generated bit because, you know, you're encouraged to share the stuff you generate – try to keep up). Furthermore, the user-generated content ensures a steady flow of new tracks, cars and Mods to punch boredom right in its squishy bits.

All the kart-racer staples are there: simple handling, ramps, booster pads and weapon pods, drifting, drafting and infuriating AI opponents that are guaranteed to nail you with a weapon just before you cross the finish line. Every. Single. Time. It gets boring and predictable really fast. So how do you avoid this monotony? You could save your booster fuel to power your shield, or you can do what the kart-racer genre was made for and actually play it with other people. Thanks

to the user-generated ethos fostering a healthy online community, finding people to race against is a breeze. The single player is nothing amazing, and sadly you will be forced to play through the career mode in order to unlock all of the customisation materials – ARGH, I know. Fortunately the career story and pre-race commentary is genuinely funny at times.

The multiplayer is what drags the experience out of the doldrums of mediocrity. Four-player split screen is perfect for groups of friends wanting to kill an evening (or each other out of frustration), but the online component is what makes this game shine. Online multiplayer is built right into the experience; rather than a menu system, players are thrown into an online hub known as ModSpot. You then drive your kart around to select the option you want: career mode, online ranked matches, customisation area and so on. All the while other online players are whizzing around between the same areas and you're free to interact together. It really is quite slick, and the online races (whether they're ranked or casual) are plentiful, loads of fun and truly make up for the awful AI opponents. **NAG**

Miklós Szecsei

THE SCORE



www.pegi.info



1 - 4



2 - 12



N/A



>Plus

- Surprisingly tactical racing
- Phenomenal customisation
- Excellent online play

>Minus

- Monotonous AI opponents
- Long loading times
- Underwhelming single player

Look & Listen
For the Fun

>Bottom Line

A lacklustre single player experience, but the game shines with four-player split screen and online multiplayer. And you get to make stuff!

75

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SBK X: Superbike World Championship

Too hard or too easy... take your pick

GENRE > Racing Simulation

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

MOTORCYCLE SIMULATIONS CAN BE great fun, but very few of them get the feeling of riding a bike quite right. It's probably got to do with the actual physicality of riding a motorcycle. Some of the later games have tried introducing some of the more complex ideas, like *MotoGP's* splitting of the front and rear brakes, and *MX VS ATV: Reflex's* use of the rider's body to avoid spills. But the real feel of it is still not there. *SBK X* makes moves in the right direction and, while it is not quite right either, it makes for a fine motorcycle simulation.

The game has an issue of balance, though... no, not in terms of falling off of your bike, but rather in terms of the difficulty applied to the various game modes. The player can either blast around the track in arcade mode, or can take on the realistic handling and physics of simulation mode. And there is a gulf between the two.

Arcade mode will put the player on one of several world famous tracks (the game includes venues like Brno, Imola and even Kyalami) in a series of very short, challenge style races. Everything about this mode – even the menus – is stripped down. While racing in it, the player will never come off of their bike... ever. They could pull a stoppie into a turn, followed by a full-throttle blast into the straight and still stay upright... a bit like one of those kids toys that always lands on it's weighted 'feet', no matter what you do to it. The arcade mode career is short and far too easy, leaving the player without a feeling of accomplishment.

On the other hand, the simulation mode will see the player bailing even if a passing



fly sneezes on him. This mode lets the player get right down to the nitty-gritty of bike racing, with every part of their career in their control. But handling the big machines is very demanding, and all but the most hardcore bike simulator fans will see themselves smeared across the tarmac of the world's greatest tracks far too often.

SBK X holds appeal for the most hardcore and the feeblest, but offers nothing in-between. While it is obvious that Milestone wanted to add something for the less hardcore players out there, they should have invested some time in a middle ground, too.

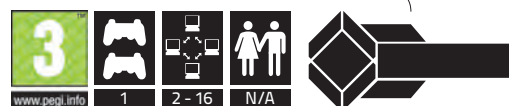
Still, if you're into your bike games, you can do much worse than *SBK X*. The graphics are pretty good, the sound is excellent (along with a solid soundtrack) and the feeling of actually winning a race in simulation mode is thrilling – even if just because the game is so damned tough at times.

True enthusiasts, who understand the way a bike handles and can separate bike racing theory from car racing theory, should

enjoy the complex simulation career, which comes complete with the ability to create your own rider. Those looking for a more relaxing experience will probably want to cast around elsewhere. This is one for the fans of the genre. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

THE SCORE



>Plus
+ Graphics
+ Deep player involvement

>Minus
- Arcade mode too easy
- Simulation mode very tough

>Bottom Line

It's a great game for enthusiasts, but newcomers and casual players may find *SBK X* frustrating.

Look Listen
For the Fun

79



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505
GAMES



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The 2010 Stunt Farting Skate Off started on a high note.



Skate 3

Cool story, bro.

GENRE > Sports simulation

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

SINCE THE VERY FIRST 3D skateboarding game, things haven't progressed much. Sure, we've got new ways to perform tricks, fancier visuals, slicker implementation all-round, and "better" angst-ridden punk soundtracks to face plant to, but the core gameplay is more-or-less unchanged because, well, skateboarding is still skateboarding. It baffles me, then, why EA has forced the *Skate* series into the same rut that it imposes on its other sports games: regular re-releases, regardless of any real need to do so.

Skate 3 attempts to implement a storyline to tie the whole thing together: you're a skater who's tired of supporting "the man", so you and a few buddies decide to go in together to form a skateboard manufacturing company. In an attempt to boost corporate image and thus sales, you will need to take to the street in an extensive program of cover-shoots, films, competitions and all the usual tomfoolery you'd expect in a skating game. While it's neat that the developers made the attempt at a story, the end result doesn't really mean much. The only difference is that your progress in the game is marked by overall board sales, as opposed to a system of magical credits.



Unlike the *Tony Hawk* series, which *Skate* arguably trumped with its first release, all ollies, kickflips, heelflips and the like are handled by flicks of the right analogue stick. Grabs are performed with the triggers, and the face buttons throw in a few flavours like sticking your leg out in mid-air. The system works well - and once you've got the hang of it, incredibly well - but it's not necessarily better than any other control scheme. The seamless game-world that you're given to explore feels quite large, and consists of a good variety of skate parks, public places like the docks and university campus, and other places you can be a nuisance. While you'll always find somewhere exciting to skate, the environments look dated, with washed-out, repetitive textures and geometry that could do with few more polygons. Still, everything functions well, which is the most important factor. One particularly nifty feature is the ability to place a marker at any location; should you bail in an attempt to perform a massive trick, just make sure that you've plonked down a marker at your desired starting location and you can teleport back at the press of a button, without the need to spend an hour hiking up the hill again. For those who find the game-world insufficient, there's a healthy park

editing tool available, and you can of course download parks made by other players or share your creations with the world if you think you're good enough.

Without any significant changes in a genre that's rapidly going stale, it's tough to demand that any self-respecting skating fan should go out and buy this without hesitation. It's definitely fun, but there's very little we haven't seen before on offer here. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE

16
www.pegi.info

1

2-6

2-6

Look & Listen
For the Fun

>Plus

- + Solid skating mechanics
- + Fun game-world

>Minus

- Very few innovations
- Dated visuals

>Bottom Line

Skate 3 might not offer anything worth shouting about, but it sticks to the books well-enough to give you plenty of entertainment.

72



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* These are all real BTW



ArmA II

It's so big!

GENRE > Combat simulator

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS

BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE'S *ARMA II* is a spiritual continuation of *Operation Flashpoint*, which is now owned by Codemasters. The game brings a very realistic virtual war to the player's PC, but it struggles under its own weight. The idea is sublime, but many elements have gone wrong with the execution, making *ArmA II* a game that will likely achieve little more than cult-favourite status.

ArmA II places the player in the role of a US Marine as part of an expeditionary force checking out a potentially volatile situation in the fictional Eastern European country of Chernarus (which sounds like it belongs in a D&D game, but anyway.)

The beauty of this game is its size. Not only does the game feature a playable area that's 225 square kilometres in size, but it offers the player a massive toy box to explore. Dozens and dozens of weapons, vehicles and other military equipment go into making *ArmA II* a varied and exciting experience. When combined with more realistic physics, including realistic ballistic behaviour, the game is a brilliant combat simulation. The addition of really incredible graphics goes a long way to help create a very believable illusion.

But that also leads to the game's first problem. It requires a monster machine to run it properly, but anyone with a fairly new rig shouldn't have too many problems.

As the player progresses through the game, the realism is further enhanced by the way the game handles player decisions. See, each objective can be approached in a variety of ways. Destroying enemy equipment, for

example, can be done by sneaking in and taking it out up close, or by calling in an airstrike. Each option has advantages and drawbacks, naturally, and these decisions will allow new missions to be made available, depending on outcomes. It's almost an RPG element to the game, although not quite.

The player's character also progresses, moving from planning squad-based operations through to larger, co-operative offensives. The problem is that the ally AI is thick, while the enemy AI is sharp as a razor. Playing a multiplayer co-op game naturally mitigates this, but the single player experience does require a lot from the player.

The game is also so large that sometimes missions can be failed before the player has had a fair chance to get underway.

Additionally, inconsistencies in material behaviour, and a host of other little issues, take a game that could have been great, and make it mediocre.

ArmA II is a fun game, when all is said and done, but the frustration factor will outweigh the fun rather quickly for the majority of gamers out there. Overly complex

menus and controls are just the start. An inconsistent AI, dodgy vehicle physics and a few other factors don't do the game (which had brilliant potential) any favours. **NAG**
Walt Pretorius

THE SCORE

16

www.pegi.info

1

2 - 50

2 - 50+

Online services

N/A

>Plus

- + Tons of guns
- + Lots of vehicles

>Minus

- Dodgy AI
- Confusing controls

>Bottom Line

ArmA II had the makings of a great combat simulator, but falls short of the mark.

Look & Listen
For the Fun

72

DEVELOPER > Acquire PUBLISHER > Rising Star Games
DISTRIBUTOR > Ster Kinekor Entertainment WEB > wots3.com

You're doing it wrong. Stop pounding so hard!



Way of the Samurai 3

Not quite a cut above the rest

GENRE > RPG

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

THOUGH THE SERIES ISN'T very well known outside of Japan, the unique-if-underachieving fusion of action and hybrid genres has made its debut appearance on the PS3. Set amidst the tumultuous Sengoku period in Japanese history, *Way of the Samurai 3* follows the story of a wandering ronin (a master-less samurai) in the fictitious region of Amana. When the game opens, Amana is under the rule of the Fujimori clan, who ruthlessly oppress their constituents. Opposing them is the Ouka clan, who'll do whatever is necessary to overthrow their rulers, and caught in the middle of the two groups are the peace-seeking Takatane townspeople. What makes *Way of the Samurai* unique is its open-ended game dynamic – not only can you choose which of the major factions to side with, but your actions will have repercussions later on in the story line, and will ultimately determine which of the more than 20 endings to the game

you achieve. You have the option of brutally massacring innocents on a whim, avoiding combat at all costs, or simply doing whichever jobs pay the most – it's all up to you, and the style of game you choose to play. Unfortunately, *Way of the Samurai 3*'s unique and promising premise is let down by some less-than-impressive production values – the game world is a small one, consisting of only eight different areas, and the game as a whole is easily completed in under 10 hours. Lacklustre graphics, with clunky animations and dated cut-scenes don't add to the experience, and neither does the all-but-complete lack of voice acting. Fortunately, the combat system, though far from revolutionary, is entertaining enough that playing through the game is tolerable, if uninspiring. *Way of the Samurai 3* certainly isn't an utterly terrible game – it's just a shame that it's not as brilliant as it deserves to be. **NAG**

Adam Liebman

THE SCORE



>Plus
+ Intriguing concept
+ Plenty locked content

>Minus
- Lacklustre presentation
- Limited game world

Look Listen
For the Future

>Bottom Line

While *Way of the Samurai 3* is a competent action hybrid game, it's disappointingly far from being an expansive, cinematic samurai adventure.

58

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Comix Zone

COMIX ZONE BLEW MY mind to pieces* when I was younger. Released for SEGA's Mega Drive/Genesis back in 1995, *Comix Zone*'s greatest flaw was timing – the game hit the Mega Drive at a time when the console was being edged out by the original PlayStation and the SEGA Saturn, which lead to poor sales, despite all the praise the game received from critics and, well, pretty much everyone who played it, really. If you didn't like it, chances are it was because the game was stupidly difficult and disappointingly short. If you did like it, then good for you, because it's a brilliant game based on a brilliant concept.

MEANWHILE...

Comix Zone is the title of a comic book being worked on by the game's protagonist, Sketch Turner. Cue a lightning strike on an obligatory fateful, stormy night and some stuff goes down that sees Sketch magically sucked into his comic book while

the comic's villain is booted out into the real world in a series of totally plausible (and not at all silly) events. In the real world the villain, Mortus, doesn't retain any of his power, but he is able to alter the comic itself (by drawing new enemies and such) to make life difficult for Sketch. On the flip side, Sketch suddenly knows kung fu (and is more badass in general, really) in the comic world, which is good, because Mortus isn't going to make getting back to reality easy.

BREAKING BOUNDARIES

This all sets the stage for some of the weirdest, most unique side-scrolling 2D platform action that you'll ever see in a side-scrolling 2D platform game. See, each level in *Comix Zone* (there are six of them, two for each of the game's three episodes – see why people complained that it was too short?) is comprised of two pages of the comic, and as you know, comics are divided into panels. Each panel in *Comix Zone* usually poses its own

For the lulz

Early on in the game, Sketch Turner actually says the words, "Cool! Cost me no sweat!" That's right – exclamation and everything. He also refers to a difficult puzzle as a "brainer", but those aren't the only wonderful quips exclaimed by *Comix Zone*'s characters. Ah, the 90s: such a wonderful, awkward period in time...



Roadkill, buddy!

Sketch has a pet rat named Roadkill (that he saved from a potentially unfortunate garbage truck accident – true story). The little dude can zap enemies with electricity, activate switches and find secrets (by tearing bits of paper off the page/level) for you. [It's a love hate relationship, but not in the same kind of way as a greased up gerbil. Ed]



unique threat, be it deadly Viking women with hooks on chains or simple puzzles featuring explosive mines and deadly fingernails. Complete a panel and you can then literally hop into an adjacent one (sometimes choosing between different panels that'll change your path through the page). Sometimes panel borders can be torn through by punting enemies into them and levels/pages are occasionally manipulated in cool ways – like when Mortus forces you to outrun a fire he's set on the page you're on. If you're up for it, sacrifice some health to build a paper plane (using the page, obviously) that'll zip around the panel you're on, taking out objects and enemies as it does. Add in useable items (like throwing knives and power ups, one of which unleashes Super Sketch – Sketch's alter ego), lots of jumping and kicking and punching and stuff, and you've got the makings of a

game that was destined to achieve the cult status that *Comix Zone* has.

BACK IN THE PRESENT...

While the game has already been repackaged and re-released numerous times on multiple platforms, it's the game's recent release on Steam as part of the SEGA Genesis & Mega Drive Classics collection that got us all excited about it again, and why you're reading all this gibberish about it here**. Even today, the game is surprisingly slick, with great animations, visuals, sound effects and (possibly most importantly) dialogue that is hilariously awesome. You can't even really complain about the difficulty anymore, because you can now save your game state and never have to worry about being killed by Kung Fung's ferociously annoying fingernails ever again.

NAG
Dane Remendes

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BRAAAAAAINS Part 2

NAG'S DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ALL THINGS ZOMBIE

NOW THAT YOU'RE OUT of the house and removed from any immediate danger, it's time to prepare yourself for the next couple of weeks before you can bunker down and start doing some large-scale damage. That broken chair leg might have served as a makeshift bludgeoning weapon until now, but surviving the massive hordes is going to require some ingenuity. To assist in that matter, we've compiled a list of the four most awesome and devastating weapons in the NAG arsenal. Good luck!

THE BUZZSAW BAT

Shaun of the Dead taught us that cricket bats are easily as effective against the zombie onslaught as the more traditional baseball bat. We've decided to expand on this idea by adding power-tool components into the equation. The construction is simple: cut a 2cm-wide gap along the centre length of a cricket bat. Then, grab one to three 20cm buzzsaw blades and pop a steel peg through the middle of each. Install the blades within the slot that you've created in the cricket bat, perhaps secured with a few nails and other bits of crude DIY-ery. The result is a weapon that has both blunt-force trauma-inflicting properties, as well as a neat slicing and dicing facility provided by the blades. Simply swing the bat at the nearest zombie and let the power of momentum take care of the rest; the blades will spin and subsequently slice through anything they come into contact with.



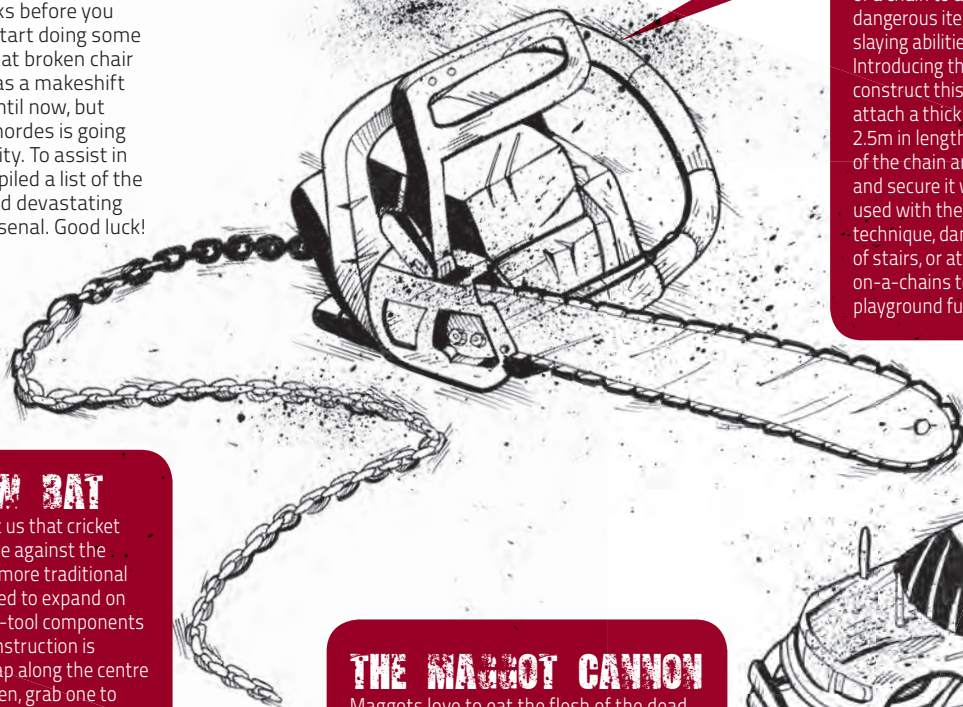
THE MAGGOT CANNON

Maggots love to eat the flesh of the dead. As gross as these little guys are, they're massively underused in the war against the shambling carcasses. To harness the power of maggot technology, simply load up a tennis ball launcher with a few kilograms of rotten, maggot-ridden steaks (ideally cut up into small, manageable chunks), and fire off a couple of rounds at the incoming undead. Ideally used against the slow, persistent type, this ingenious invention will take some time to get working, but once the maggots have found a home in the warm, squishy intestines of a horde of zombies, there's no stopping them. Given enough time, the restless menace will simply fall apart, no longer a bother to the remaining human race.



THE CHAINSAW-ON-A-CHAIN

It's a well-known fact that the attachment of a chain to any spiky, heavy or otherwise dangerous item increases its zombie-slaying abilities by a factor of ten. Introducing the chainsaw-on-a-chain: to construct this feat of engineering, simply attach a thick chain, anywhere from 1m to 2.5m in length, to a chainsaw. Loop the end of the chain around the chainsaw's handle and secure it with a double-nut bolt. Can be used with the wildly-swinging-overhead-technique, dangling the device down a flight of stairs, or attach a series of chainsaw-on-a-chains to a roundabout for some playground fun!



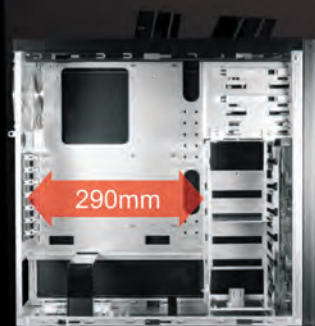
THE RC CAR EXPLOSIVE

Grab a remote-controlled car. Through the science of duct-tape, attach a microcassette recorder to the car, with some helpless cries of "no, please don't eat me!" recorded onto the device. Next, attach a primed grenade with an elastic band wrapped around the safety lever. Shove a lit cigarette between the body of the grenade and the elastic band, so that when the cigarette burns down, the elastic will melt, release the safety lever and blow any nearby zombies sky-high. The trick with this fine weapon is to steer the RC car through a horde of zombies in the hopes of attracting as much attention as possible, then detonating the whole unit when there are lots of zombies surrounding it. If necessary, drip a little human blood onto the car to give it that enchanting scent that zombies just can't seem to get enough of.



2010 NEW

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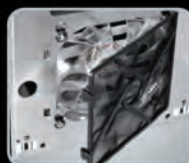
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"This changes everything, again"

AFTER MONTHS OF SPECULATION, the accidental loss of a couple of prototype units and endless arguments over desired specifications, the next iPhone has finally been unveiled by Apple. Officially entitled the Apple iPhone 4, this new device is set to annihilate the mobile market with a hefty dose of new features and the million Apple fanboys that would buy Apple-branded spaghetti if it came in pearlescent white.

Regardless, the iPhone 4 is looking quite spiffy. Its flagship feature is the super high-resolution display that Apple has named Retina. The scratch-resistant 3.5" glass screen is capable of displaying four times the pixels of the previous generations, at a healthy resolution of 960x640 at 326 pixels per inch. According to Apple research, anything over 300ppi is indistinguishable by the naked human eye at a distance of 10-12 inches, but the company notes that it's gone "comfortably over the viewable limit" to show off just that little bit extra.

The redesigned body squeezes the iPhone 4 down to the slimmest smartphone

available, at a mere 9.3mm, but despite the reduction in size, the hard specs are actually on the rise. The ARM-based 45nm CPU has been upgraded to the same 1GHz chip used in the iPad (up from 600MHz), and while it cannot be confirmed at this time, educated guesses from around the industry claim that the RAM has been doubled to 512MB. The accelerometer has also received a bit of an upgrade in the form of an accompanying 3-axis gyroscope; the combination of the two should give motion sensing equivalent to that of the PS3's SIXAXIS controller. Finally (although, there are plenty of smaller upgrades that we haven't mentioned), the camera has been given a boost to 5MP with an integrated LED flash, and video recording has been given the HD (1280x720) treatment.

The iPhone 4 was revealed to be priced at the \$199 starting point for the 16GB version, although history has shown us that we can expect to pay much more for the device when it eventually launches here, which will likely be Q3 this year.

"For over 10 years 3DMark has shown gamers what to expect from the next generation of real-time 3D graphics. So we are especially excited to announce 3DMark 11 and show the possibilities of DirectX 11"

Futuremark CEO, Jukka Mäkinen, seems very excited for the next iteration of 3DMark.

Snippets

Hitachi says they've developed the world's first **SSD-equipped laptop optical drive**. The Hydrive is a standard-sized laptop optical drive, but with a 32GB or 64GB SSD built in. Designed for ultraportable notebooks, Hitachi plans to slim the drive down even further for netbooks and tablets in the future.

Futuremark has revealed a new version of 3DMark. **3DMark 11** uses a native DirectX 11 engine created in-house at Futuremark to measure the performance of DirectX 11-enabled gaming PCs.

Uncapped mobile broadband packages will be available by the time you read this, courtesy of MTN. Lite and Pro packages will be available at R749 and R1999 respectively. Both packages will be throttled down to speeds of 128kbps if you exceed the monthly limit (3GB for the Lite, 10GB for the Pro).

In August, **WCG Ultimate Gamer** will return for a second season. Syfy, World Cyber Games and Samsung have partnered to bring you the show, which sees a number of the US's top gamers competing in gaming-related challenges to see who comes out on top.



ZOTAC H55-ITX WiFi

Looking for an H55 based motherboard but in an ITX form factor? Well look no further. ZOTAC has the H55-ITX WiFi which features, a full length PCI-Express slot, two DIMM dual channel and supports any LGA1156 CPU on the market today. Added to that you get built in Wi-Fi connectivity, 10 USB ports, six SATA ports, Gigabit Ethernet, HDMI, DVI and optical outputs which makes for the perfect HTPC motherboard that can actually support high end components. If you're in the market definitely check it out.

Precision!

In keeping with peripheral manufacturer Mad Catz' recently formed tradition of releasing *Call of Duty*-themed gamepads, mice and keyboards for *Modern Warfare 2*, the company announced that they've signed a deal with publisher Activision to do the same for *Call of Duty: Black Ops*. We've not seen the products yet, but we're sure they'll be exactly the same aside from a *Black Ops* logo where the *Modern Warfare 2* logo once rested.

In other peripheral-related news, Thermaltake recently unveiled their Challenger range of gaming keyboards. What makes these keyboards so unique is that there's a 6,000rpm fan mounted on top of it, designed to keep gamers' hands cool and sweat free during heated gaming sessions. Expect three different Challenger models (all of which will reportedly cost under \$100) to show up in stores in the near future.

Big enough for you?

Seagate is gearing up to bring the first 3TB hard drives to the market later this year. They do warn, however, that some users should be prepared to fork out cash for a new machine to get the most out of these high-capacity monsters. If you're running Windows XP, you may have some problems because the OS can only handle a maximum of 2.1TB of storage space. The 64-bit versions of Windows Vista and Windows 7 are not restrained by that limitation. Regardless, if you're running a machine built on the legacy PC BIOS firmware, you still won't be able to boot from a 3TB drive. Seagate advises that users will need a PC with a Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (the replacement for the legacy BIOS), or to have these 3TB drives connected to RAID controllers or host bus adapters in order to use them.

Know Your Technology

ArtX: ArtX is the company that originally designed the graphics processor that would eventually end up in NINTENDO's GameCube (Flipper). This company was headed by David Orton who originally came from Silicon Graphics (much like most veterans of the graphics industry). ArtX was eventually bought by ATI which subsequently based its upcoming R300 graphics processors of the work ArtX had already started.

3Dfx: 3Dfx was started by former Silicon Graphics employees (Gary Tarolli and Scott Sellers) and went on to make some of the most pivotal 3D Graphics chips in the history of 3D acceleration. Namely the SST1 (Voodoo) chipset which offered, for the first on consumer level graphics accelerators, hardware texture mapping, mip-mapping and other such features previously reserved for professional hardware. With the rise of ATI and NVIDIA in 3D acceleration, 3Dfx made several design and business decisions that resulted in 3Dfx's demise and in 2002 the company filed for bankruptcy selling the vast majority of its remaining assets to NVIDIA.

ATI: ATI was started as Array Technologies Incorporated in 1985 and its primary business was manufacturing integrated

graphics cards for IBM and Intel. ATI has since grown to be the 2nd biggest provider of GPUs in the world mostly through the Radeon series of graphics processors. The company's IP is also found in several other sectors including gaming consoles, mobile devices and set-top TV boxes. Throughout its history ATI has purchased a number of graphics controller companies, including Tseng Labs and ArtX. In 2006 AMD bought ATI and renamed the company AMD Graphics Product Group, but for the most part it is still referred to as ATI.

NVIDIA: Self proclaimed inventor of the GPU. NVIDIA was started in 1993 by former AMD designer Jen-Hsun Huang, Chris Malachowsky and Curtis Priem formerly of Sun Microsystems. The company is best known for its Geforce, Quadro and Tesla products catering to the desktop, workstation and HPC markets respectively. NVIDIA remains the largest discrete graphics processor manufacturer in the world and in 2009 was the 5th largest Fabless semiconductor company in the world. Much like the company's chief competitor, NVIDIA has made several acquisitions from rival companies in various sectors, the most notable being 3Dfx's IP and engineers in 2000. Other purchases include, AGEIA, ULI, Hybrid Graphics and PortalPlayer.

Hardware Scoring System

- 1 > Not worth reviewing so it's unlikely to ever appear in the magazine.
- 2 > Hardware turns on/ installs but doesn't do much else.
- 3 > This is reserved for all products that function exactly as advertised but not well at all.
- 4 > Hardware that is worth considering if your budget is extremely tight.
- 5 > Middle of the road product that does not stand out from the competitors, performs and works exactly as advertised.
- 6 > Slightly above average product with additional functionality over the standard model.
- 7 > Good product that falls only a little short of being a must have item.
- 8 > Reserved for products you will definitely want to go out and buy if you're in the market.
- 9 > Excellent product, near perfect.
- 10 > The stuff of dreams, the best in the market par none.

Hardware Awards



This award can be given for a product that is fast, useful, great value, innovative, first of its kind, etc. It is typically only awarded to a product that scores 7 or higher.



The Dream Machine award isn't always given to the fastest version of any product, but the most versatile, powerful, etc. Only products scoring 9 or 10 get this badge.

The Mosh Pit

MSI GT760

The GT760 will be powered by an Intel Core i7 720QM processor, an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 285M (with 1GB GDDR3) and up to 12GB of DDR3 RAM. Dynaudio sound promises excellent audio performance. www.msi.com



THERMALTAKE ARMOR A90

Thermaltake's A90 features front and top fans with blue LEDs for ambient lighting and has 6 3.5-inch drive bays and 1 2.5-inch bay (which you can dump an SSD in). There's also a handy security lock for your mouse and keyboard cables, useful for LANs. Other features include holes for liquid cooling and tool-free installation. www.thermaltake.com



ECS BLACK SERIES A890GXM-AU

This Socket AM3 motherboard won the Best Choice Award at Computex 2010. Integrated Radeon HD 4290 graphics, ATI CrossfireX support (with ATI Hybrid Graphics Technology to use the integrated GPU in conjunction with add-ons) and USB 3.0 make up the feature list.

www.ecs.com.tw



THERMALTAKE ELEMENT T

If you're not a fan of the A90, the Element T features red LEDs rather than blue, features the same mouse/keyboard security lock and has more drive bays (7 x 3.5 inch, 1 x 2.5 inch). www.thermaltake.com





The Dream Machine



LN₂

SO GIGABYTE HAS RECLAIMED its spot as our Dream Machine motherboard with its GA-X58A-UD9. Neo insists it is the most powerful motherboard he has ever tested, using words like "extreme", "intimidating", "record-breaking" and "ultimate overclocker's dream." We would have just gone with "pure awesome with an extra dash of awesomeness drizzled on top," but what do we know? When the canister of liquid nitrogen gets delivered here every other week for his overclocking escapades, we're more interested in freezing leaves and bugs. Well, Geo and Savage are at least – the rest of us just sit here and speculate how long it's going to be before one of them accidentally freezes an appendage.

We also oohed and aahed a lot when the Samsung P2770HD monitor arrived, and since the T260 that has been our Dream Machine monitor for quite some time is now no longer available, we declared the P2770HD a worthy successor. It's an OMG experience when playing *MW2*.

The Damage...

COMPONENT	PRICE*
CASE	R3,999
PROCESSOR	R9,648
MOTHERBOARD NEW!	R7,999
MEMORY	R1,399
GRAPHICS	R7,881
STORAGE	R3,699
SOUND	R1,688
POWER	R4,200
DISPLAY NEW!	R3,499
HEADPHONES	R1,316
KEYBOARD	R2,001
MOUSE	R1,076
TOTAL	R48,405

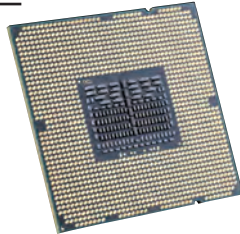
* At print time

NOTEBOOK

ASUS ROG G51J-3D
rog.asus.com

System Specs:

CPU: Intel Core i7 720M (1.6GHz)
RAM: 4GB DDR3
Graphics: NVIDIA GTX260M
HDD: 2x 320GB SATA2
OS: Windows 7 Home Premium
Mouse: Razer Abyss
Extra: NVIDIA 3D Vision pack



PROCESSOR
Intel Core i7 Extreme 975
www.intel.com



MOTHERBOARD **NEW!**
GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9
www.gigabyte.com



MEMORY
OCZ Triple Channel PC12800 DDR3
www.ocztechnology.com



GRAPHICS
ASUS EAH5970
za.asus.com



STORAGE
Seagate Barracuda XT 2TB
www.seagate.com



SOUND
ASUS Xonar Essence ST *
za.asus.com

* Does not work with Logitech G35 headphones



POWER
IKONIK Vulcan 1,200W
www.ikonik.com



CASE
Ikonik Ra X10 LIQUID
www.ikonik.com



NEW!
DISPLAY
Samsung P2770HD
www.samsung.co.za



HEADPHONES
Logitech G35 Surround Sound *
www.logitech.com



KEYBOARD
Logitech G19
www.logitech.com



MOUSE
Logitech G9x Laser
www.logitech.com

* Does not work with ASUS Xonar Essence ST

Tech Q&A

WINDOWS UPGRADE

From: du Plooy

"SHOULD I UPGRADE TO Windows 7 from Windows XP SP3? Or will it take too much from my resources (gaming perspective)."

Neo: *It is best to move to Windows 7 for several reasons, including, but not limited to better driver optimizations for Windows 7 as opposed to Windows XP, and in general better system performance and increased security.*

SUGGESTION

From: Cobus

"I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE a suggestion for a hardware review for the next issue of NAG. Can you review the NVIDIA GeForce GTX470 and/or GTX480, in comparison with the HD 5970 and HD 5870? So that we can know if NVIDIA finally reigns supreme in the race for best graphics card."

Neo: *We have reviewed the GTX480 and GTX470 in this issue, but not against the ATI alternatives. If you want to know the order of graphics cards in terms of speed, the fastest GPU is the GTX480, then 5870, GTX470, then the 5850. The fastest graphics card (dual GPU) remains the Radeon 5970. This may change with the GTX490 but that remains to be seen.*

DREAM MACHINE

From: Nom De Plume

"HI, I HAVE A number of questions about the Dream Machine, so I'll try to stay brief and to the point.

1. If I went for Quad-Crossfire there probably wouldn't be space for the sound card would there? Would there even be space with tri-Crossfire?
2. What are the best headphones to use with the Xonar Essence ST?
3. I'm not very familiar with water cooling: Is it possible to cool the graphics cards with water cooling? If so would I need to buy extra cooling units?
4. What is the best coolant to use with water cooling?
5. With Crossfire and with all the RAM slots filled, would the PC get too hot to overclock?
6. I'm glad you reintroduced the prices of hardware, but could you also, on the Dream Machine page, mention the issue in which the hardware was reviewed?
7. I would like to overclock the Dream Machine but not to the point where it damages the components. Unfortunately I've never really overclocked anything and motherboard manuals aren't very helpful with regard to the BIOS e.g. "RAM voltage: this is where you configure your RAM voltage" what a waste of ink. So I was hoping you could, at some point, do a feature on basic overclocking for noobs similar to the DIY segment.
8. And lastly, which companies/sites

are the best for importing hardware that isn't easily available in South Africa? Perhaps you could permanently list your preferred ones somewhere in the Hardware section?"

Neo:

1. No, not with four graphics cards. With two dual GPU graphics cards there would be space. (Same applies for 3-way crossfire).
2. There are plenty of headphones that can be used with the ST, but the Creative Aurvana DJ/ Live headsets come to mind. If your budget stretches, try the Sennheiser HD 800 set.
3. Yes (to both questions)
4. That will vary from manufacturer to manufacturer; it's always best use what is supplied with the kit itself.
5. Entirely dependent on cooling and system specs.
6. We'll see about that going forward
7. I believe we have already had several issues dealing with overclocking in the past, but we are not opposed to doing it again in the future.
8. The best places to import hardware are www.newegg.com and www.mwave.com, but it isn't the easiest thing to do and can become very costly. Should hardware break at any point, you'll have to pay for shipping back and forth.

CHASSIS?

From: SK8KID

"WHEN BUYING A CASE, is there anything you have to consider other than that your motherboard is ATX or M-ATX?"

Neo: *Not really, but air flow should be something you should keep an eye on. Any case that doesn't have enough exhaust fans will likely cause increased*

temperatures. The minimum should be a single 120mm exhaust fan at the rear.

BUDGET INCREASE

From: TheVinci

"IN THE PAST I have received some fairly good advice while reading NAG on where to buy hardware, but I was hoping you could give me some advice on where I could sell mine. My PC is 2 years. I will not be selling my HD since it contains important data that I cannot store elsewhere at the moment. I also do not overclock my hardware (don't know if that is an important thing to note). Where would be a good place to sell/advertise this hardware and if places such as Junkmail are my best bet, what would be a good price?"

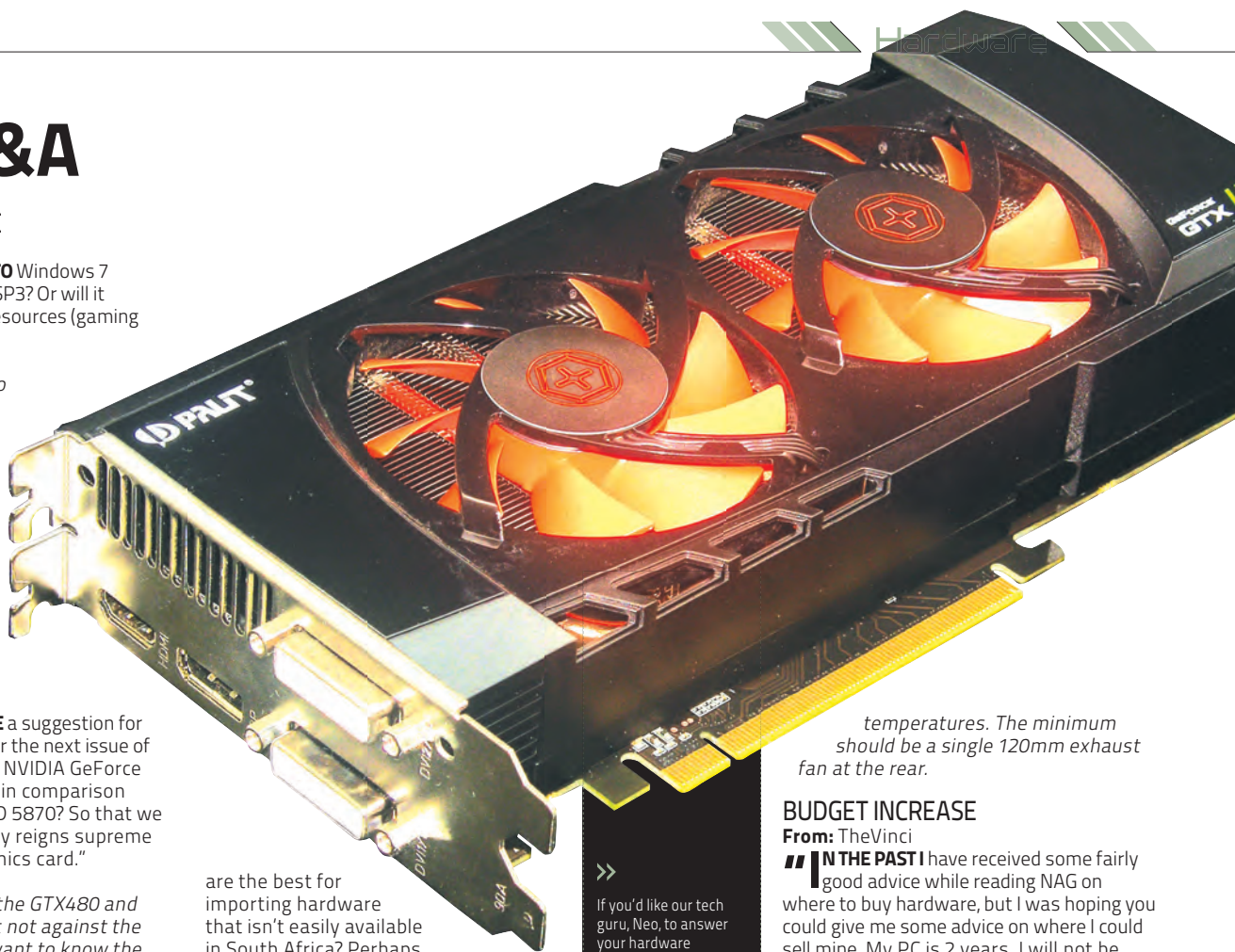
Neo: *You could try Gumtree or other local tech forums like SystemShock, and the Prophecy classifieds.*

INTEL I7 930-960 PRICE/ PERFORMANCE

From: Vincent

"HI NEO, AND EVERYONE at ever-awesome NAG! I'm looking to buy a new PC, but could use some advice on which CPU to pick. My current choice is the Intel LGA1366 i7 930, but I am not sure whether the i7 940/950/960 would be worth the performance increase, over the 37/49/51% price increase respectively. And also, if the overclocking capabilities of the i7 930 would make it a more viable option. I am on a tight budget, but would gladly sacrifice in other divisions (less RAM, smaller HDD, things that I can still upgrade later on etc.) for a CPU that would last me for the next 2-3 years or so. Any advice would be appreciated. Thanks for the great magazine every month!"

Neo: *If you're going to be overclocking then you may as well buy the Intel Core i7 930, as it can overclock to higher performance levels easily. However, overclocking is not a guarantee and is largely dependent on your motherboard, RAM and cooling. At worst, the 930 is a good CPU and offers better value than the other ones you mentioned.* **NAG**



Samsung P2770HD



LCD MONITORS AND TVS these days are just about as similar as they are ever going to get. In fact there isn't much of a difference between them other than where they are usually found in the household. As Full HD has become the standard for any useful LCD, it only makes sense to use the same display for TV and your PC. This is what the Samsung 2770HD does, and it must be said does a pretty good job, and as such becomes our new Dream Machine display. While the ideal LCD would be a unit with all these features, LED backlit and most importantly 3D Vision compatible, there just isn't such a monitor on the market now, but, and until then, this is about as good as it will get.

SIZE

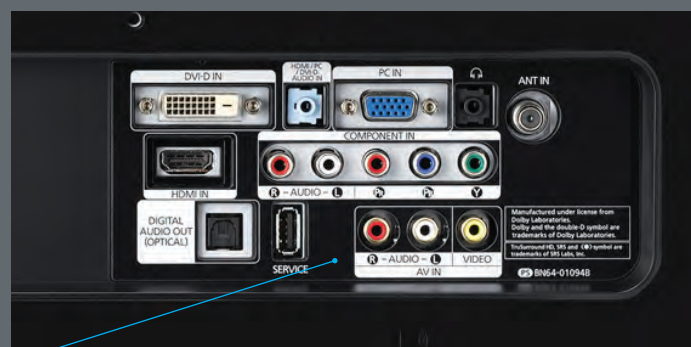
The P2770HD, as the name suggests, is a full 27" (68.5cm) inches which makes it the biggest LCD monitor one can buy short of buying a 2560x1600 30" unit. Given that it is a 16:9 display, its maximum resolution is lower than that of our previous Dream Machine LCD which was a 16:10 1920x1200 display. This does mean that you have fewer pixels on screen for a larger display, but it does mean you avoid black bars while viewing HD content and, for most people, the additional 120 pixels on the vertical axis will not be missed.

FEATURES

The 2770HD can accept just about any relevant connection method there is on the market save for Display Port. HDMI, DVI, and analogue-RGB (VGA) are all available for your console or PC. For broadcast the unit has S-Card, component and composite inputs. Sadly, however, there is no PIP, but that's a small sacrifice to make given everything else the monitor offers. With a 5ms response time and a 50,000:1 contrast ratio it is more than capable of delivering great gaming performance, be it from a console or PC.

SOUND

With 2x3W stereo speakers built-in, the sound is not going to impress anyone, and it is only really for basic audio reproduction. The sound quality isn't bad but is probably the weakest part of the display. To make up for that the P2770HD has a single stereo mini-jack output and an optical audio output with full Dolby Digital and SRS TruSurround HD support. Should you use headphones or a full speaker system the sound is good and quite loud.



AESTHETICS

This is a large monitor and quite cumbersome but still portable at 8.2kg. A smaller profile is offered by LED backlit monitors from Samsung, but they make use of an external power adapter, which isn't the case with the P2770HD. The unit isn't height adjustable, and the tilting angle is limited to only 20 degrees, but once again this shouldn't be much of a problem for most users. With all that said, it is an attractive monitor and the elegant finish on the front goes a long way into hiding just how big this monitor really is. The touch sensitive buttons on the front look good, not as great as those on the XL2370, but close enough for us. **NAG**





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ASUS G SERIES

With an exterior design reminiscent of a futuristic robot warrior, the ASUS G51Vx deploys a full array of technological armaments to give you the edge. Fight against the forces of darkness with the illuminated chiclet keyboard, and cut down on your reaction time for fast reflexes. Strike before the enemy can react with dedicated gaming hotkeys. Superior EAX™ technology provides true-to-life battle effects with immersive CMSS surround, coupled with premium Altec Lansing® speakers. Hear and feel every squeeze of the trigger and every stealthy enemy footfall. Equipped with an Intel® Centrino™ 2 processor and genuine Windows Vista® Home Premium, the ASUS G51Vx is equipped with a NVIDIA® GeForce™ GTX 260M graphic card, along with the PhysX™ physics enhancement engine that provides a sense of realism to the gaming experience. Experience the new ASUS G51Vx today. You'll find that virtual reality has just become a lot more real.



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Hardwired

By Neo Sibeko

My personal gaming dream machine

IT'S BEEN A LONG time since I upgraded my PC and, for the most part, I have not found the need to, since gaming is something I do very rarely and when I do, it's for very specific titles. As it is, there isn't a compelling reason to upgrade my PC for a particular title. If anything is pushing me to upgrade it would have to be maintaining playable frame rates when playing in full 3D.

This got me thinking on what I would build if resources were not an issue. So instead of making up a hardware configuration using my imagination, I managed to, or figured out rather, how I could build the most powerful gaming system this side of sanity without needing any exotic cooling or building an SMP server.

To that end I would start by pairing four NVIDIA GTX 480 graphics cards together, each cooled by a Danger Den DD-GTX480 water block; this water loop would be completely separate to the one used for the CPU. The reason being that there aren't many, if any, water cooling kits or configurations could be built that would be able to cool the CPU and the graphics cards adequately enough.

While NVIDIA stipulates that Quad Crossfire is not meant for gaming but for record-breaking attempts, there's nothing that prevents me from using it in a gaming environment. Given that I would build this computer to be the ultimate in gaming nirvana, the system or chassis would need to be able to take two PSUs (SilverStone ZU1200M units) with one dedicated to purely powering the graphics cards. The second unit would be powering the rest of the system including the Intel Core i7 980X CPU operating at a modest 4.2GHz with all 12 threads enabled.

This configuration would be set to 200x21 to allow the memory to operate at 2GHz CL7 with a 4GHz North Bridge or UNCORE speed. With a triple channel 6GB DDR3 2000MHZ CL7 kit, the memory bandwidth would be well used in the Quad-SLI setup.

Graphics card overclocking is something that varies from one card to another, but all GTX480 cards are able to clock up to 800MHz on the regular air cooler, but since I would be using water cooling, I would clock all four to 850MHz, which should be doable with a 1.087~ 1.1V vGPU setting. That being said, the memory would likely be kept at the default settings because, in such a setup, memory bandwidth isn't an issue, and any bottleneck there is a result of the CPU not being able to feed data fast enough via the PCI-Express bus to saturate the graphics cards' bandwidth.

This graphics card setup would then output to three 3D Vision Surround ready displays such as the Acer GD235HZ 24" Full HD screen. I would employ three of these displays side by side. Such an experience with full PhysX effects and 3D Vision supporting game (with Bezel Correction) will make for the ultimate gaming experience, especially in car simulators.

The motherboard of choice would be the incredible

GIGABYTE X58A-UD9 motherboard, as it's the only motherboard other than the classified board that will natively support four GTX480 graphics cards.

Despite what some may believe about the ASUS brand of sound cards, they remain peerless in sound quality, but because of the 4-way crossfire system there's no way to use any internal sound card, and as great as the on-board ALC889A controller is on the GIGABYTE motherboard, there is something better out there, and that's the CREATIVE X-Fi Surround 5.1 for use with the GIGAWORKS G550W 5.1 Speaker system.

This would take care of the audio part of the system and for the headphones I would have to select the SENNHEISER HD-800 set, as it's probably the most precise headphone set one is likely to need.

Not ever having cared for mice and keyboards as much, I must admit that I am drawn by the Microsoft SideWinder X6 Keyboard and the Sidewinder X8 mouse. However given that I'm left handed, the only real option is the Razor Death Adder mouse which is specifically made for left-handed users. As far as game pads and controllers are concerned, the standard Xbox 360 controller works well enough; I'd just take it in black.

All of this equipment would have to be housed in an equally appropriate case and that would be the COOLERMASTER ATC-S 850.

"This got me thinking on what I would build if resources were not an issue. So I figured out how one could build the most powerful gaming system this side of sanity without needing any exotic cooling or building an SMP server."

Compared to the dream machine that we currently have in the magazine, this is twice the PC, however looking at the price in US dollars it costs roughly the same and with the exchange rate as it was when I wrote this, my system came in at \$7,200 which is around R54,000, and that's not much more than what our current dream machine costs.

With this setup, however, an "upgrade" would not likely be necessary for the next three to four years, which is an insanely long time in computing terms. However, if in some alternate universe I was able to build such a machine, I would likely be the person who would upgrade the system to the Core i9 on the X68 Platform and 2011 socket next year. Still, it's always fun to dream, right? **NAG**

ROG EXTREME SERIES

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Drive your system to the limit.



RoG Rampage III Extreme Revving for Action

Built to accommodate the wildest overclocking, this board delivers Intel X58 goodness that can carry up to six-core CPU's. The Rampage III Extreme uses 40 amp chokes and 130% better heat removal than the competition, plus digital-analog combo VRMs to reinforce the power supply, giving tune-happy users peace of mind as they pursue record-devastating benchmarks.

Extreme OC Kit, bundled with the board, offers deep

overclocking features and result tracking. Then there's ROG Connect for overclocking your PC from an external machine, leading to better results, and even RC Bluetooth, an interface letting users overclock from a smartphone. Republic of Gamers engineers have also added USB BIOS Flashback. Just one press flashes the BIOS in seconds from any USB stick, even when powered. Think of the possibilities, then choose Rampage III Extreme – enable the power.



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Life, Hardware and Ch@ps

By Derrick Cramer

So... TV anyone?

RIGHT, YOU'RE ONE OF those people who owns a DSTV decoder, you watch your Series on MNet and Animax, your movies on MM, your sport on Super Sport and ESPN, your documentaries are courtesy of the BBC and Discovery, and for music you have VH1 and MTV. You've decided to invest in an HD PVR and a Blu-ray player and now for the final purchase, a new TV. Which should you go for? Plasma? LCD? LED? Do you want to save money and buy something from byD:sign/Hisense, or would you go for the well established, and far more expensive Sony/LG TVs? Do you need HD Ready or Full HD? Well that's why I'm here, so let's get started.

PLASMA VS. LCD

LED TVs are extremely expensive for what you get and out of reach for most people. Furthermore, they haven't been affected much by the recent price drops. For these reasons we won't be using them in this comparison. Right, onto LCD vs. plasma. Plasma TVs have better contrast ratios resulting in deeper blacks and brighter whites. LCDs have caught up a lot but can't beat plasma just yet. Next up, viewing angle, where plasma wins again. You can view a plasma TV from almost 180 degrees and still be able to see the picture clearly, whereas the picture on an LCD will change, lose colour and distort. With regards to moving images, plasma wins out again, showing far less ghosting than LCD TVs, resulting in a smoother looking picture. LCDs have an edge when it comes to still images, which isn't very important, and burn in, which is. Often, you'll find that a channel has its logo permanently on the screen (the Discovery World or the Super Sport "S"), and this is bad for a plasma TV. If left on for too long (a day or two), this image will be "burnt in" to the plasma TV and will always appear there faintly no matter what you watch. LCD TVs are generally lighter than plasma TVs, and also consume around half as much power as plasma TVs. So it all comes down to what you want out of your TV. We say plasma has better contrast, but if you don't notice the difference, will you really care? Something to think about.

CHEAP BRANDS VS. HIGH-END

Why can byD:sign sell you a 42" Full HD LCD TV for half of what Sony can despite using the same LCD panels? The answer lies in the chipset used, and the features. The Sony TV will have better colours, more features such as multiple HDMI ports and lower response times, and better build quality. Sony puts more time and money into R&D and so can produce a better TV. Is all of this worth the price increase? Only you can answer

that. Go to a retailer and have them set up the two TVs side by side and play the same source through both TVs. Will you see the difference? Chances are yes. Will this justify spending more money? Maybe, that one is up to you.

"You've decided to invest in an HD PVR and a Blu-ray player and now for the final purchase, a new TV. Which should you go for? Plasma? LCD? LED? Do you need HD-Ready or Full HD?"

HD-READY VS. FULL HD

Everyone will immediately tell you Full HD is the way to go, future proofing and bragging rights. Do yourself a favour and smack these people, hard. Two years ago two families I know each bought a 42" Full HD LCD TV on special at the time for R8,500. They decided that they would spend the extra R2,000 to have Full HD because they would surely use it sometime in the near future. Two years on and neither TV has even seen a 1080p signal yet. Shameless marketing 1, consumer 0. Think to yourself, how many Blu-ray titles are out there? Now, out of those how many do you want? How many can you afford? What about TV channels that broadcast in Full HD? If there were over 10 channels then your choice is easy. If there are 2 or 3? Not so clear-cut is it? Buy what you need; future proofing only works if you actually have a plan for how you will use these features in the future. If you have an SD DSTV decoder and a normal DVD player, with no plan to upgrade to HD anytime soon, go for the HD-Ready TVs, you won't notice a difference without Full HD signal.

The most important thing to remember when TV shopping is that you are the person who will be using the TV for hundreds of hours. Don't buy a TV for bragging rights, for future proofing that you don't need, for features that you don't notice, to impress your friends, or because someone "in the know" told you to. Buy the TV you need, then spend the balance of your budget on a holiday as a reward for making the smart choice. **NAG**

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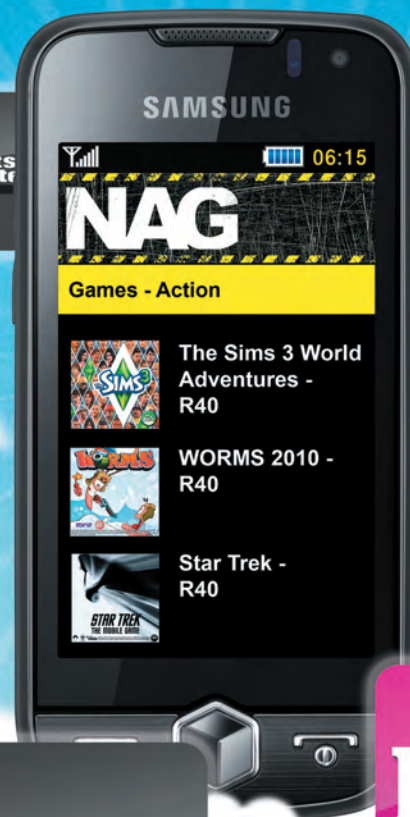
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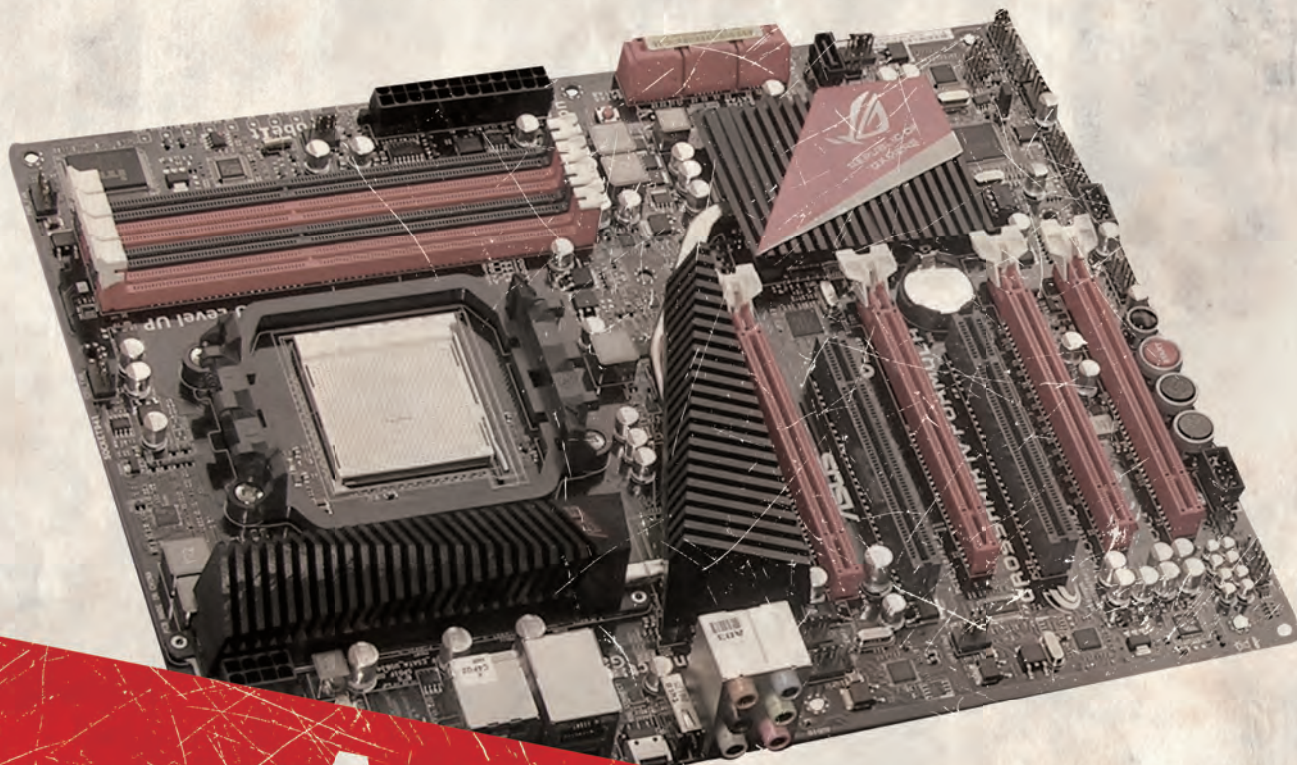


NAG MAGAZINE

Presents

★ THE ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN ★

WORLD'S HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT



ASUS CROSSHAIR IV FORMULA

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Contender ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



THIS SHOWDOWN, THIS STANDOFF, this long running competition between the two largest and possibly best motherboard manufacturers was always going to happen. It was inevitable, as this bout never took place during the original Athlon64 days. Both these manufacturers were just not this heavily invested in the ultra high-end. In those days, AMD was ruled by DFI, powered by NVIDIA's NFORCE 4 SLI chipset (think DFI Lanparty NF4 SLI-DR).

Since then, the powers have changed and, without a doubt, the AMD 890FX and SB850 chipset is the MCP to beat. As to who has taken DFI's place, that will be decided here, between these two. Between these two motherboards there lies not only the fastest, but the greatest motherboard the AMD family has ever known.

While it is true that both companies make motherboards for a variety of users, the most resource-intensive products are aimed exclusively at what they would refer to as the power user. This is merely a euphemism for the overclocker, or more appropriately the extreme overclocker. While it is true that both products are representative of the best features of any

AMD motherboard out now, they are more concerned with raw performance.

These motherboards do not promise better frame rates in games, improve your skill level or anything that usually comes from press releases. No, these two motherboards are trying to break world records and boost egos. There's no room for any gimmick here that isn't directly related to performance. They both look great and represent the best the AMD platform has to offer.

PERFORMANCE

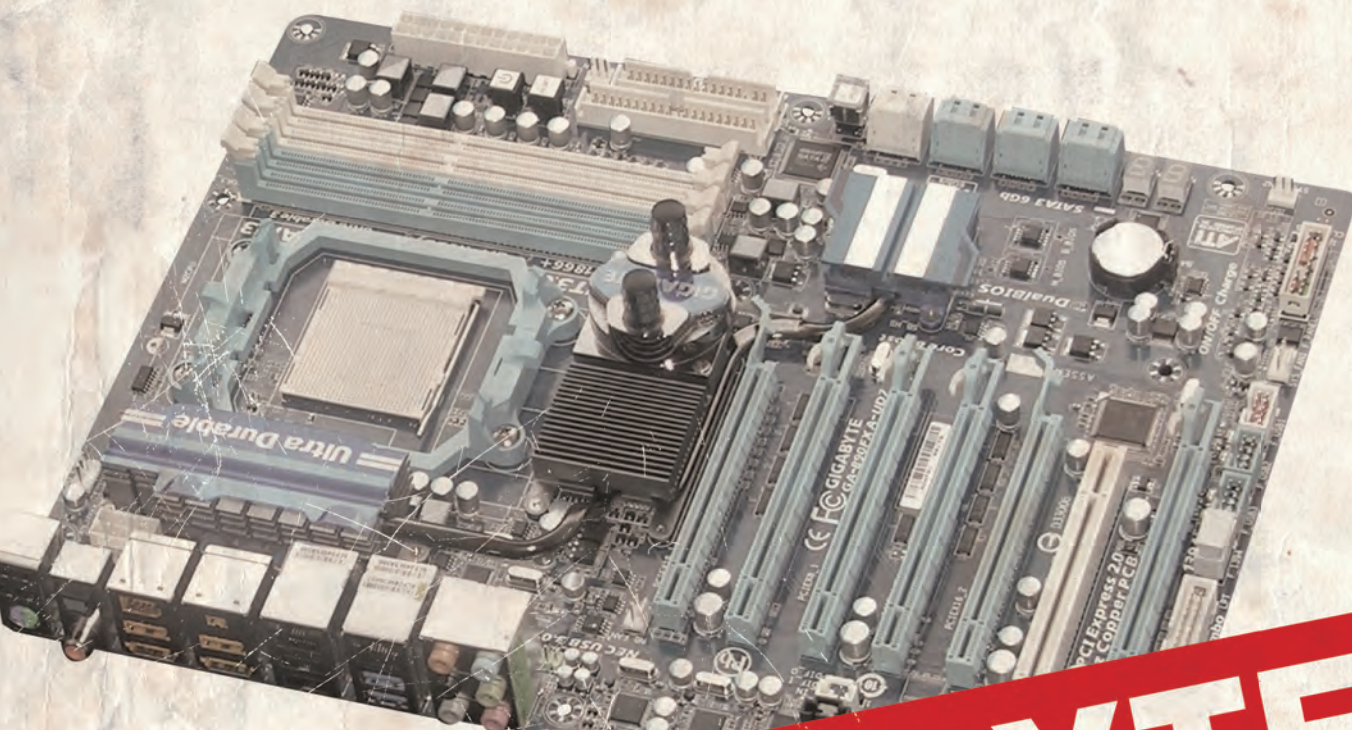
While we are very familiar with the 890FXA-UD7 and it's better than average performance, next to the Crosshair IV it is simply outclassed. We ran the tests many times over, but at every turn the Crosshair IV produced significantly better numbers. As it is, it's without question the fastest AM3 motherboard we have ever tested at these settings. The memory performance

numbers are much better than what we would have expected, and it is this incredible memory tuning that gives the motherboard its performance edge over the competition. It's hard to figure out how this is possible because, even using CPU Tweaker, the memory sub timings look correct and not better tuned than on the UD7 motherboard. This tuning must be in the BIOS in areas where we have no access.

The GIGABYTE motherboard on the other hand was very predictable, its numbers were constantly lower than those of the Crosshair motherboard, but they didn't vary as much. Everest memory performance didn't change much no matter the BIOS version we used or how many times the tests were repeated.

★★★ RINGSIDE IS WHERE IT'S AT ★ NO HOME TV ★ NO RADIO ★★★

THE MAYHEM IN MZANTSI



GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7 ★★★★★ Contender ★★★★★

same, North Bridge and raw CPU frequency overclocking was a different story.

The primary divider to enable memory to operate at 533MHz (1,066MHz DDR) on the Crosshair IV Formula did not work at all on our CPU, and that also applies to a particular memory setting of 1,667MHz with a 250MHz HT. All other settings worked just fine other than these two combinations.

Where NB overclocking is concerned, on the GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7 motherboard we recorded a North Bridge frequency as high as 3.2GHz which was a good 200MHz higher than that of the Crosshair IV motherboard. This may not seem to be important at all, but we are here to tell you different. Indeed HT (HyperTransport) speed isn't important at all, past serving as a reference clock for the various components and sub systems; NB frequency, however, is directly related to memory performance and transactions even within the CPU local caches.

It must be said that for those not interested in overclocking at all, the Crosshair IV would always be the better motherboard in performance, but given that we were trying to find out which was the ultimate AMD 890FX board, the Crosshair IV leading at default speeds was not as important as how it performed when overclocked, which presented a very different picture.

Winner: ASUS Crosshair IV Formula

OVERCLOCKING

As quick as the Crosshair IV was at standard speeds, it could not overclock the CPU to the same levels as the UD7 motherboard. While memory overclocking was generally the

This is particularly evident in the Level 3 Cache performance which stands to gain significantly from a higher NB speed.

For a finely tuned system used for gaming, competitive overclocking or number crunching, the highest-possible North Bridge speed comes highly recommended. This is particularly important now with the Phenom II X6 CPUs, which have a new memory divider which allows DDR3 2,000MHz functionality. With such a high frequency, you will want a NB frequency that is as close to twice that speed of the memory as possible. (It's a similar sort of theory to Intel's Core i7 Uncore/NB frequency relationship with the memory). Often, a system running the memory at 1,600MHz, with the reference 2,000MT/s NB frequency will deliver lower performance than a system operating the memory at 1,333MHz and a 2,400MT/s NB frequency. That means you'll want to make full use of the NB frequency advantage of the UD7 motherboard where possible, especially because when using 1,600MHz memory, the 3.2GHz NB frequency makes it exactly twice the memory frequency.

★ THE ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN ★

Where CPU overclocking was concerned, we were mostly limited to the CPU sample we were using. Under normal air cooling, there wasn't much of a difference in the limits of the CPU. Where the Crosshair IV Formula had an advantage, however, is where it comes to core selection.

The BIOS on the Crosshair IV Formula allows you to select any of the available six CPU cores to use with the minimum being a single core. The 890FXA-UD7 on the other hand limits you to a minimum of two cores and precisely which of those two cores is not an option as it always will be the first two.

That means in a case where one of the first two cores is weaker than the other, your BOOST and POST speeds will be limited by the weaker core. On the Crosshair IV, you can simply disable

the weaker core and boot with a single one all the way into Windows.

Despite this disadvantage, the UD7 was the better overclocking motherboard. In fact, the UD7 broke the PiFast Phenom II X6 World record, with a frequency well above 6.25GHz on one of the cores while the highest speed we saw with the Crosshair IV was 5.7GHz. This difference is quite large and could have been down to a BIOS issue, but with the F2a BIOS (beta) on the 890FXA-UD7 motherboard and the 0801 BIOS on the Crosshair IV, this was the result we obtained.

With the CPU cooled to -188°C, both motherboards functioned normally but sometimes the Crosshair IV would have problems POSTing if you changed settings in the BIOS, and several restarts would be required to make the motherboard functional again, as it would fail at the CPU Init. State and stop at C7 sometimes. The UD7 had some issues as well, but it would attempt several times without powering down until it could POST and eventually boot into Windows.

With the CPU cooled near the limits of what liquid nitrogen is capable of, the Northbridge frequency on the UD7 could be boosted as high as 4,275MHz. Not the highest around, but fairly respectable, as NB overclocking is largely CPU dependant. We were not able to come anywhere near this on the Crosshair IV Formula which topped out at 3,225MHz regardless of the CPU/NB Voltage or temperature, and this is reflected in the results.

So for overclocking we would have to give the nod to the UD7 motherboard as it simply walked all over the Crosshair IV with the particular CPU we used.

Winner: GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7

FEATURES

This has always been an ASUS strong point and, as mentioned earlier, this is the most feature-packed AMD chipset-based motherboard from ASUS (save for the Crosshair IV Extreme) and as such has a number of nice features which we have grown to expect, like being able to save BIOS profiles, In-BIOS updating OC-Station support, CMOS clear, Power and Reset buttons, an X-Fi

Floating Ht Bug

The Crosshair IV Formula has what has been termed the "floating HT bug" which causes the HT speed to vary by anything up to 2MHz which means that if you're using a 20x multiplier, your CPU speed could be out by as much as 40MHz. Given that this 2MHz oscillation is on top of the 0.4 ~ 0.7MHz that all motherboards have, this number could be as high as 54MHz sometimes, which is no good when you're working at the limits of the CPU. Stick to BIOS version 0707 to avoid this as much as possible.

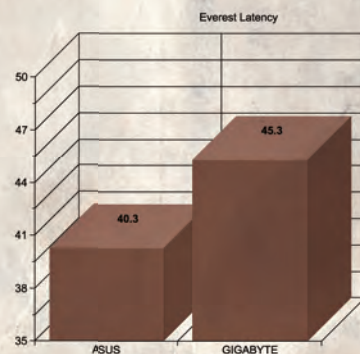
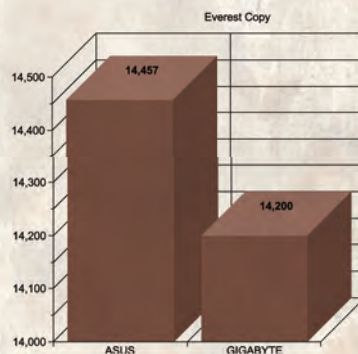
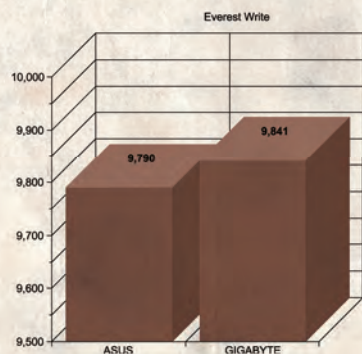
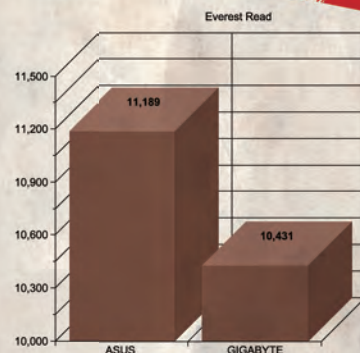
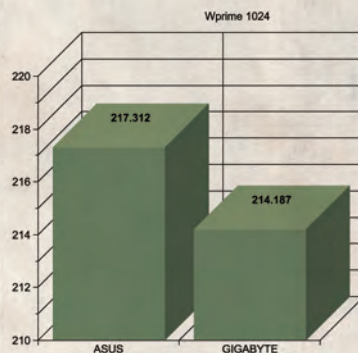
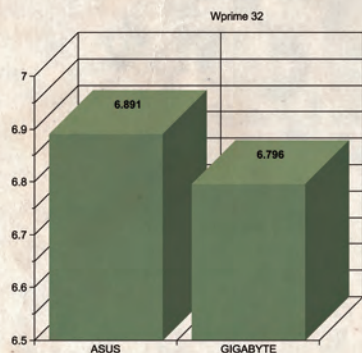
Test Setup

- AMD Phenom II X6 1090T (1008 CPMW)
- Corsair Dominator DDR3 1600MHz CL8 1T (Unganged mode)
- ASUS MATRIX 5870 PLATINUM
- Catalyst 10.4 WHQL
- Windows XP SP3/ Windows 7 64-bit Ultimate
- Ikonik Vulcan 1.2KW PSU
- ASUS Crosshair 4 Formula BIOS 0801 Official
- GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7 BIOS F2a Beta

The Special One

For every generation of chipset, there is always the motherboard that stands out from the rest. There is always a motherboard that pulls ahead of every competing product when put to the ultimate test. As far back as the original Abit NF7-S to the DFI LanParty NF4 SLI-DR, the Asus M4A79T-Deluxe and now the GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7. The special motherboard isn't always the easiest to use and in fact can be the trickiest to tweak but when you get it right, nothing else comes close. From the company that employs the world's #1 overclocker has come the world's #1 Socket AM3 motherboard in the 890FXA-UD7.

The Graphs



★ THE ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN ★

capable audio controller and, if that doesn't convince you, the motherboard is actually one of the best looking boards ASUS has ever produced. So aesthetically it can't be faulted.

The UD7 on the other hand is a function-driven board: while it is pleasing to the eye it isn't a match or at least isn't as striking as the Crosshair IV. It does, however, do several things that the Crosshair IV Formula does not. Most crucial is the BIOS POST LED which is on the motherboard, but missing on the Crosshair IV. On that motherboard you need to use the OC-Station to see what the POST code is and that is something you must buy separately. While it does facilitate overclocking, (ASUS's software overclocking program is vastly inferior to GIGABYTE's Easy Tune 6, so the OC-Station is a necessity) it's an additional cost. Another major advantage is also the ability to run 4-way Crossfire on the UD7 using four graphics cards. This is not possible with the Crosshair IV and is limited to 3-way Crossfire, but it is also worth noting that the UD7 is also slightly wider than the Crosshair board.

Even as BIOS profiles are appreciated on the Crosshair IV, saving can be a little tricky because

you must first save to the slot then rename it afterwards to something relevant. On the GIGABYTE motherboard, it's as easy as pressing "F11" and naming the profile.

What is also present on the 890FXA-UD7 but missing on the Crosshair IV Formula is the ability to load the previous settings that POSTed, but you can easily do this on the UD7 and the BIOS is able to tell which settings POSTed successfully five times or more and such. These may be small features, but ASUS would do well to include them going forward.

Not necessarily a feature, but what can be annoying is that on the Crosshair IV Formula, every time you press the CMOS clear button the date goes back to 01/01/2002 and you will have to set the date manually again, while on the UD7 it keeps the date regardless of how many times you clear the BIOS, and only if you remove the battery will the current date be lost.

Winner: GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7

CONCLUSION

Both these motherboards are great, in fact you won't find better on the market from any other manufacturer. For the die-hard, hardcore fan who will partake in both overclocking and gaming, the 890FXA-UD7 is certainly the motherboard you should be going for. However, for the user that will overclock but may not bother with sub-zero or competitive overclocking the Crosshair IV is an attractive alternative.

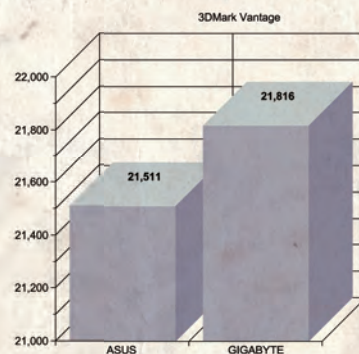
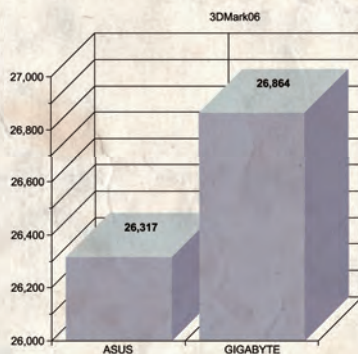
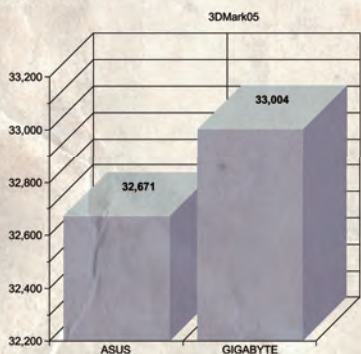
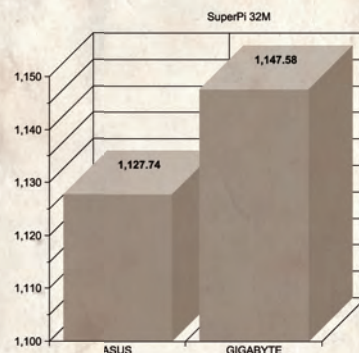
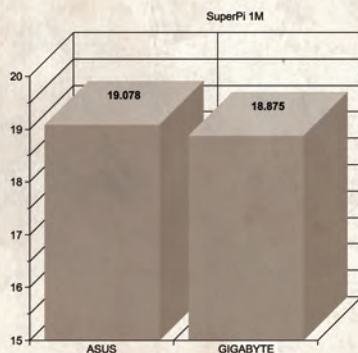
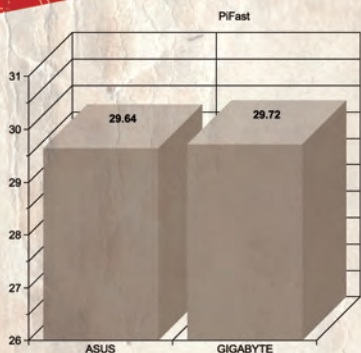
Had the 890FDXA-UD7 not existed, the Crosshair IV Formula would have easily been the best 890FX motherboard money can buy. However the UD7 does exist (but can be significantly harder to find than the Crosshair IV locally), and if we are forced to pick a winner, it will have to be the GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

Results ★ Results ★ Results ★ Results

ASUS CROSSHAIR IV FORMULA
 Performance: 9/10
 Overclocking: 8/10
 Features: 8/10
 Overall: 8.5

GIGABYTE 890FXA-UD7
 Performance: 8/10
 Overclocking: 9.5/10
 Features: 8.5/10
 Overall: 9



DIY: Hands-on with Dremel

Part 5: Xbox LED mod

THIS IS THE LAST mod we'll do to the Xbox 360. We're going to combine elements that we've used throughout the entire process to give you the ultimate console, one that you can bet will be the only one of its kind (unless your friends are also following along). To add that final touch to the Xbox, we're going to install twelve bright red LEDs in various locations on the motherboard, so that when the machine is on, it lights up the interior as well and shines through the casing.

STEP 1: DISASSEMBLY

Follow the tutorial from the May issue of NAG in which we showed you how to open your Xbox for the purpose of installing a side-panel window. This time, we're going to take things a step further by removing the motherboard. Once you've reached the aforementioned point of disassembly, remove all remaining screws on the underside of the metal casing. Now, head to the front of the unit and remove the white plastic cover on the power button and Ring of Light PCB, then remove the three small screws. With all the screws removed, gently pull the circuit board away from the metal casing (it's held in place by its connection to a small USB-like port). Remove the DVD drive, the fan shroud and the fan, the last of which will need a little coercion to remove, but there are no screws to deal with. With that done, you can remove the motherboard from the casing. Set it aside for now.

STEP 2: PREPARE THE LEDS

We're going to run a comparatively complex circuit that involves an array of twelve LEDs divided into four series. Each series will have its own resistor, and the entire array will be run in parallel. Refer to the wiring diagram on this page if you're confused. Prepare the LEDs by trimming their leads down to about 1cm and bend them at 90 degree angles away from each other. Also, trim the resistors to have about 5mm of wiring on each side. Once everything is ready, solder four sets of LED/resistor combos as per the photo. As you may notice, I originally planned to have only three sets, but once everything was in place I decided that it wasn't quite bright enough and quickly whipped up the extra lights. Once you've got your four series ready to go, measure out lengths of wire and solder them to each series, taking care to work from positive to negative at all times. Use the image on this page as reference to where I installed my lights, but you may want to do it a little differently depending on your side-panel window or other factors. When you're done, twist the wire pairs together to make them easier to work with.

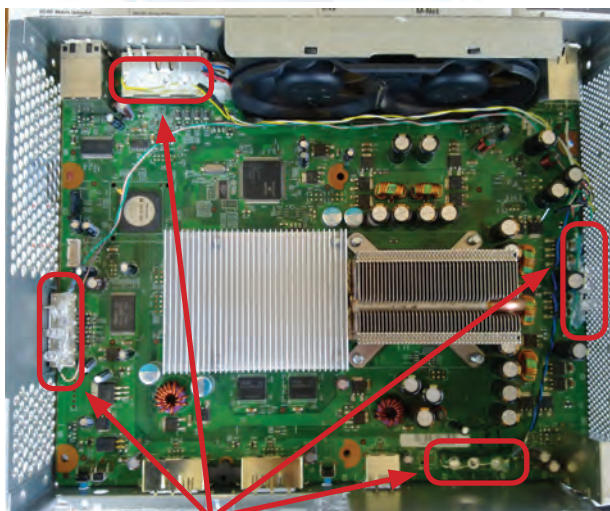
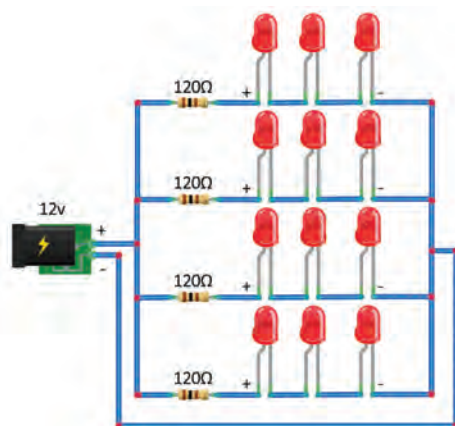
STEP 3: INSTALLATION

Flip the motherboard over so you can see the underside. We're going to draw power almost directly from the power cable. Look at the photo to see exactly which pin-outs we're going to use (this is directly underneath where the power cable attaches to the motherboard); one will provide us with the 12 volts of power we need (the positive terminal), and the other will ground the current (the negative terminal). Solder colour-coded wiring (5-10cm in length) to each point and pass the wires through the nearby hole; make sure that you don't accidentally use the screw-holes. At this point, it might be a good idea to test the LEDs, so attach each series in turn to your power source and turn the Xbox on very briefly; too long and it stands the risk of over-heating. Now you're going to attach each set of LEDs to the motherboard with the glue gun. In this case, rather use too much glue than too little, as any exposed wiring or components that come into contact with the motherboard's components or metal casing (which is grounded) will cause a short at the very least. When you're positive that everything can fit into the spaces that you've allocated for the lights, glue them in place and give them about half a minute to dry. The only thing left to do now is run the wiring across the motherboard, taking care not to interfere with the fan, shroud or optical drive, and connect everything together at the power source. When that's done, use a little heatshrink or insulation tape on any exposed wires and give the lights one final test. If everything works according to plan, re-attach the fan, shroud and optical drive and put your newly-modded console back together. If the lights aren't functioning, chances are that there is a short. In this case, remove each series from the circuit and test them individually until you've found the culprit; it'll probably just need to be re-glued in place. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

What you will need

- 12x 3.3v 20mA coloured LEDs (the brightest you can find, within reason). I'm using 12Kmcid LEDs
- 4x 120ohm resistors
- Plenty of wiring
- Low-temp or variable-temp glue gun
- Soldering iron
- Sharp-nose pliers
- T8 and T10 Torx screwdrivers



LEDs

Check out the Cover DVD this month for a mini-mag we put together on a case mod series of articles we are running on the NAG website. The document you're looking for is called The Bit NAG Online Case Modding Project. pdf. If you want to continue following the series, check out www.nag.co.za for the latest instalment. The completed case mod will be given away at the NAG stand at rAge in October, so keep an eye out for details on how to enter in the September issue of NAG.

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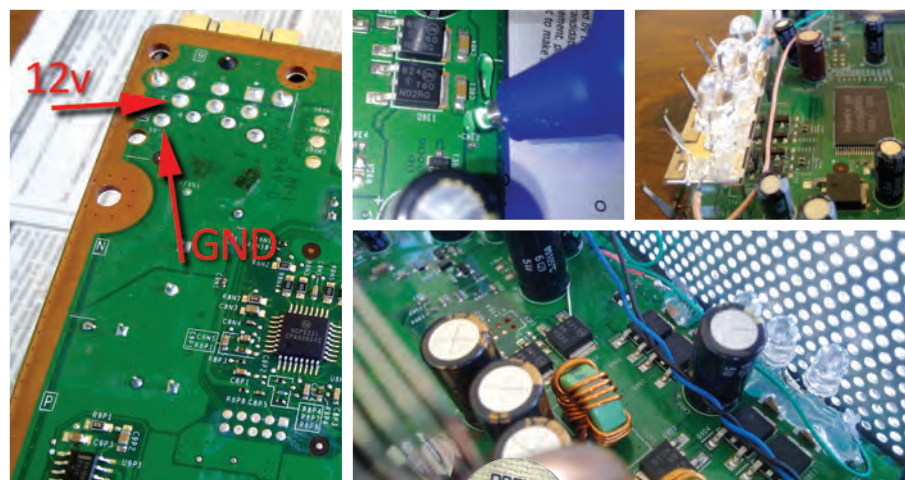
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Tips from the experts

Butane torches: Some time ago, we talked about soldering techniques with butane torches on PCB. As butane torches can be quite versatile, we'll have a closer look into Dremel's two models: the VersaTip and its bigger brother, the VersaFlame. Both tools combine a multitude of applications in one. As the VersaTip and VersaFlame are powered by butane gas (the same gas you use for cigarette lighters), they offer the cordless freedom that allows you to work anywhere you want. Both come with handy attachments that turn the torches into gas-driven multi-tools. The VersaTip with its pencil-shaped design is optimized for soldering in narrow spaces, hot-cutting, hot-shaping, heating and bending heat-sensitive materials like plastics, heat-shrinking and much more. The VersaTip's 17ml tank lasts for 45 minutes on max power. The VersaTip and its bigger version, the VersaFlame both heat up its open flame to 1,200°C. The bigger 22ml tank (which lasts up to 75 minutes on max power) and the widened base turn the VersaFlame into an ideal stationary burner; having both hands free allows you to work easier on your product. All-in-all, Dremel offers two extremely versatile gas torches to cover as many different heat-related applications as possible.



Oops!

In last month's tutorial, we accidentally left out this image. It shows you exactly where to draw power from for your controller LEDs. Sorry about that! Blame the designer!



ASUS ENGTX480



IT FINALLY HAPPENED. NVIDIA eventually lifted the curtain on the long overdue GF100 based GeForce series of graphics cards. After numerous delays, the graphics card has shown up in more or less the configuration that had been rumoured nearly half a year ago. Despite the wishes of some polarizing write-ups online, the graphics cards had better availability at launch than what the competition (ATI) offered in November of 2009.

With that said, the NVIDIA GTX400 series is actually five months later than what consumers would have wanted, and with five months to make up for, the question remained, "was the wait worth it?" The answer to such a question is not as clear-cut as some may want it to be. Regardless of where you stand, it is obvious to everyone that the GTX480 is indeed the single fastest GPU we have seen to date. While it isn't the fastest graphics card on the market, as that honour belongs to the competition's Radeon HD5970 graphics card, being able to claim the fastest GPU ever produced is very important to NVIDIA. So much so that the company poured a ridiculous number of gates into

a core that is physically smaller than that of 2006's G80 but far denser and more powerful per square millimetre. How many gates the GF100 houses exactly will remain within the walls of NVIDIA, but the number they are willing to publicly disclose about the GF100 core is 3.2 billion gates. That makes it the densest processing unit that you can buy in any consumer level CPU or GPU. In fact, that makes it more than twice the size of the already large GT200 core (1.4 billion) by a good 400 million gates, which means you can fit a single 7800 GTX core in there and still have gates left over, or you could almost build a complete G80 GPU using the left over transistors. (ATI's Cypress GPU in the Radeon HD5870 houses 2.1 billion transistors.)

Now that you can appreciate just how massive an undertaking the GF100 project is from a manufacturing and real estate point of view, let's move on to the actual mechanics that make it the single most programmable and advanced GPU we have ever seen.

Besides the GPU computing properties which are unprecedented, the single biggest or the most basic difference

between the GT200 core it replaces is geometry performance. This is specifically Tessellation and related technologies, such as displacement mapping, which take up some sizeable part of the silicon with dedicated silicon via the Polymorph units, of which there are 16. What this means is that the GF100 potentially has anything up to eight times the geometry performance of the outgoing GT200 GPU. However, because the GTX480 does not use the complete GPC (Graphics Processing Cluster) complement on the GF100 die, that number is a little less, but at peak levels could probably offer up to seven times the geometry performance of the outgoing GPU.

With such an investment into the geometry processing aspect of the GPU, NVIDIA has made some changes to the ROP functioning and pairing on the GF100. With more efficient ROPS with finer granularity in configuration than in previous GPU's, the GF100 is better able to take advantage of the same number of ROPs than in the previous generation, while an additional 16 have been added as well. (They are configured in 6 groups of 8, but on the GTX480 only



Specifications

Core: 700MHz GF100 (40nm)
Processors: 480
Render Outputs: 40
Memory: 1,536MB GDDR5 (3,996MHz)
177GB/sec
API: DirectX11/OpenCL 1.0, CUDA, PhysX

40 are active and 32 on the GTX470) The new ROPS allow a new 32xCSAA (Coverage Sampling Anti- Aliasing) mode which has a performance hit almost equivalent to traditional 8xMSAA but offers significantly better quality (24 coverage samples and 8 texture samples are used) especially around object edges. In some operations the new ROPs can execute instructions up to 20 times faster than those that were on the GT200.

Texture units on the GTX480 have actually decreased from the previous GT200 as a result of one SM (Streaming Multiprocessor) having been disabled, however real world performance in texturing yields results better than those of the GT200 with the full 64 Texture units. Unlike in the GT200, the Texture units are logically aligned with the SM's and broken down into 4 units per SM.

They are de-coupled and the old Texture Processing Cluster (TPC) is gone which allows more flexible use of the Texture units. These units also feature a programmable 64KB L1 cache which facilitates memory access for unusual algorithms such as those used in Physics calculations, ray tracing and the like. These texture units are also clocked higher than the ROPs which mean they execute faster as well. (Whether the units are clocked the same as the processing core or scale with the global clock but have a different frequency is unknown to us.)

What is evident in the GTX480 and all GF100 based cores in general is that while complexity has increased significantly and the core has been rebuilt from the ground up, the GPU aims to leverage more GPGPU functionality than any other GPU before it.

From a practical side of things, the GTX480 is not without its faults. These are operating temperatures and power draw figures. These two factors stop the GTX480 from being a 10/10 product despite doing everything else right. With power consumption numbers above 300 Watts with the GPU under load, it is a factor that is impossible to ignore because it means, realistically speaking, that you should not attempt to run the GTX480 with anything less than a quality 600 or 650 Watt unit. Given that it's NVIDIA's highest

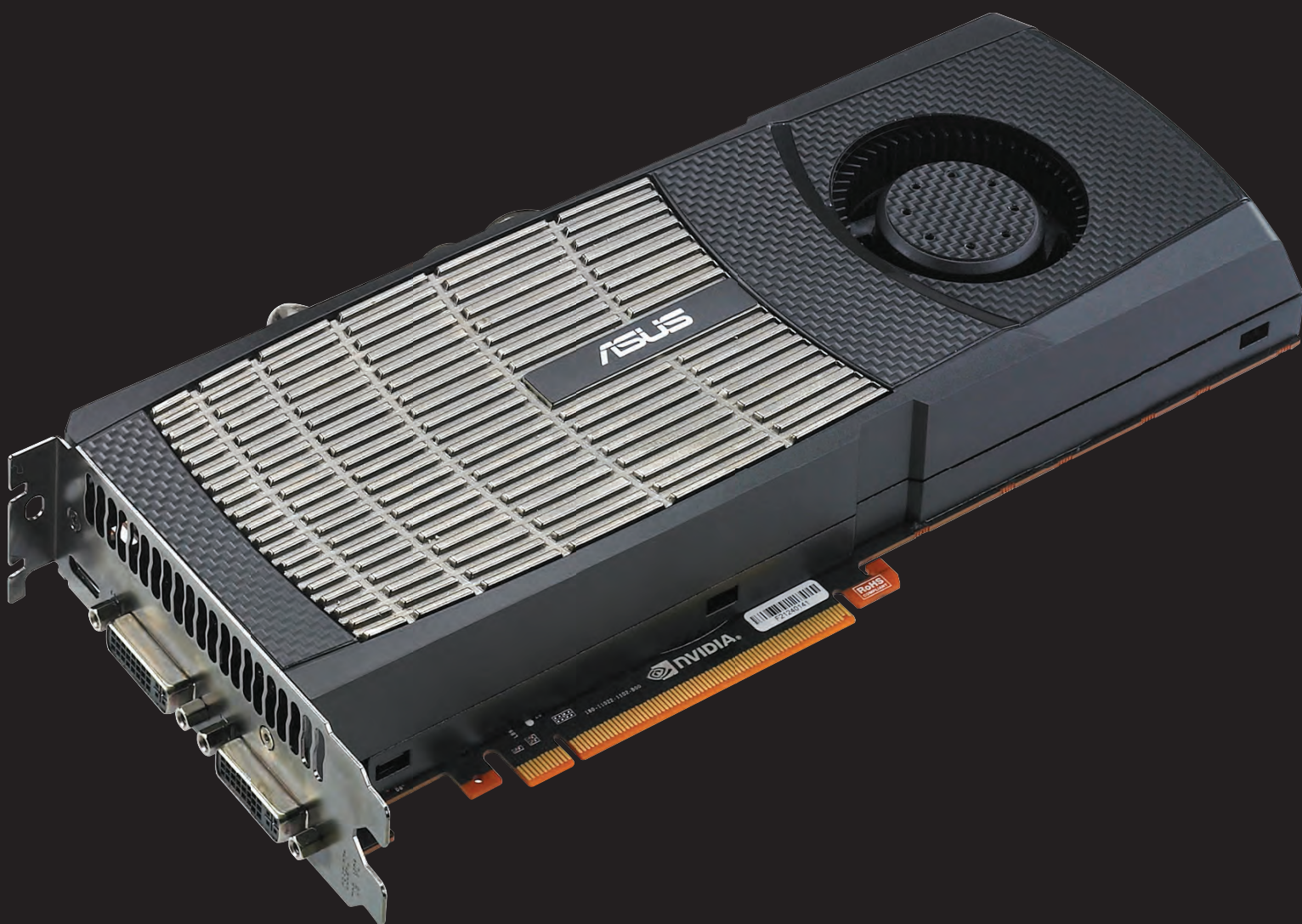
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performing part, a system with such a card would usually be in a system equipped with an overclocked Core i7 CPU, which means power draw figures at load could be anything up to 600 Watts and as such, a 650 Watt PSU would be cutting it too close.

Another factor that weighs negatively on the GTX480 is the amount of heat the card puts out. Despite all the technical reasons, 95°C under load will be concerning to many users. While NVIDIA and its partners assure us that there is no risk posed by such a temperature, we would have preferred temperatures in the late 80's at the most.

An unconfirmed rumour by a certain company tells us that these high temperatures are purely because of a contact issue between the IHS and the actual core on the graphics card and that with better contact, the temperatures would be noticeably lower. Regardless of how true this is or not, the fact remains that, the GTX480 is one hot card.

If you can overlook those two issues, the GTX480 offers some of the best performance we have ever seen in a graphics card. While our numbers may not look impressive compared to previous products, it is important to note that at the time we were experiencing a CPU bottleneck and not a graphics card limitation. In almost every title that is out at the moment the GTX480 puts a respectable distance between itself and the Radeon HD5870 regardless of the model (this is because the Cypress chip doesn't

benefit significantly from overclocking it seems), and if you're looking for the fastest graphics processor money can buy, the GTX480 is the card you are looking for.

Other than raw performance, API compliance (DirectX11 in particular) and GPGPU features (native support for C, C++, FORTRAN, OpenCL, DirectCompute 5.0, Java, Python), what will be interesting to those who want the ultimate PC gaming platform will be NVIDIA 3D Vision Surround which is similar to ATI's Eyefinity save for supporting a maximum of three displays instead of six. It also works only in SLI or better setups (that is two GPUs required or more). With these limitations it may seem a weak counter to what ATI offers, however a significant boon to 3D Vision Surround is that it supports 3D on all three displays, which means you can experience active 3D on all connected monitors, which is a worthwhile trade-off to some, especially because the six display setup isn't ideal for gaming since the second set of displays runs on top of the other three monitors, and in most spaces this isn't a feasible setup.

While NVIDIA would like to propose that the GTX480 delivers the ultimate in gaming, and that claim may be true to some degree, the truth is that investing in two GTX480 cards and a third card for PhysX or for additional graphics horsepower and hardware accelerated physics will require at least a 1.2KW PSU at the least, and factoring the heat produced by such a configuration

Benchmarks

Heaven Benchmark 2.1: 1,341
3DMark Vantage: P17,270
3DMark06: 22,233
Crysis Warhead 1,920 x 1,080: 68.77fps
Resident Evil 5 1,920 x 1,080 4xAA: 100.7fps

and power draw, it could end up being an extremely expensive exercise.

Overall, we are impressed with the GTX480 and, despite its shortcomings, it's still a graphics card worth owning, especially if you want to play the latest games with the most advanced settings enabled. The GTX480 is an excellent graphics card that delivers the ultimate performance and is certainly worth the investment.

NAG
Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + 4-Way SLI
- + CUDA
- + 3D Vision Surround

>Minus

- Heat
- Very heavy power draw

>Bottom Line

It may have been late, but NVIDIA has done it again by producing not only the largest but fastest GPU ever.

08
 out of ten

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AMD Phenom II X6 1090T Black



IF YOU ARE ONE of those people who is not convinced by multi-core processors and is adamant that no program needs more than two cores, then you should stop reading right about now. However if you're one that embraces technology, be it beneficial now or in the future, 2010 has to be one of the best years in CPU technology in a long time. AMD and Intel have both introduced six core CPUs and both have been met with some excitement, rightfully so because six cores are really better than four.

No surprises then that AMD has brought out their first six core part, following several months after AMD introduced the Magny Cours (Istanbul) 12 core server CPU. This CPU internally was made up of two six core dies, and as such it would have been a painless process to produce a CPU with just a single six core die. AMD has done exactly that and what we end up with is half a Magny Cours CPU or, as we like to refer to it, the best thing to come out of AMD in recent history.

While it is true that not many programs right now are able to take advantage of more than four threads at any given time, it's good to have them for those programs that are multi threaded which are

increasingly becoming more common.

Before we take a look at the CPU itself and its performance, it is worth noting that this CPU was manufactured at Globalfoundries, which is going to be AMD's primary manufacturing facility for both CPUs and GPUs going forward. The new Thuban core may still be manufactured on the older 45nm node, however several improvements have been made to the manufacturing process and proof of this is how, despite having two additional cores, the total TDP has remained the same at 125Watts. Highly impressive given that the previous Deneb based Phenom II X 965 (C2) had a TDP of 140Watts (later 125Watts with the C3 stepping) with around 200 million fewer gates. It may be hard to believe but it is true, and proof of that is also in how much cooler the Phenom II X6 is when compared to the previous black edition quad-core CPU.

The additional transistor count in the X6 CPU seems to have come mostly from the two additional cores, while some other logic was required to enable the Turbo Core feature of the new CPU, this logic was already present in the X4 Deneb based CPUs but turned off for a number of

reasons. This feature has thankfully been enabled and with that obviously improved performance.

How Turbo Core works (much like Intel's Turbo technology) is the CPU is able to increase clock speeds dynamically depending on load and on the 1090T, specifically the clock speed can increase by anything up to 500MHz. This increase in clock speed is directly related to how much load is on the CPU and how many threads are engaged. So, that is if anything less than four cores are being utilised you can experience a significant speed increase, and this holds true for most programs. What is worth mentioning however is that this feature isn't as elegant as what Intel is offering and while the performance gains are great, the voltage supplied to the entire CPU increases as well. This includes cores that have been throttled down to as low as 800MHz. This may ensure stability but it is worth keeping in mind that the total TDP may not exceed 125Watts, but is rarely going to be lowered at all under such conditions.

This should not be any issue for anyone, because which cores have increased clock speeds and which do not is controlled

rather efficiently by the CPU and one is unlikely to notice the switch between normal 3.2GHz operation, the 800MHz powered down state or the boosted 3.7GHz clock setting.

As far as IPC goes, it has to be said that the new X6 is slightly faster than the older X4 CPU. However, this increase in clock efficiency does not seem to us a direct result of a concerted effort by AMD in increasing instruction rate, but rather that Phenom II X6 benefits from the small changes made to the CPU in its entirety barring the two additional cores.

Those that were expecting increased cache sizes are likely to be disappointed as the Phenom II X6 features the same 6MB L3 cache. How much difference this makes in performance is hard to tell, but we suspect that even though an increased cache size could have improved single thread performance by some margin, the investment into die area would have been greater than the gains, or if anything, would have increased the cost of manufacture.

What remains puzzling however is the North Bridge (NB) frequency that may have been expected to increase to 2.4GHz, but has remained at 2GHz. Granted, this was probably done for compatibility, TDP and other such technical reasons. On our sample CPU increasing the NB speed to 2.4GHz and above yielded tangible benefits in just about every benchmark we ran. Previous Phenom II CPUs were limited by comparatively low NB speed; however on the Phenom II X6 1090T we were able to select a frequency as high as 3GHz without adjusting the NB/CPU Voltage.

Given that the new CPU is finally compatible with DDR3 2000MHz, the higher NB would allow such RAM frequencies to yield some truly impressive numbers in memory access tests. Despite that however, because of the increased memory support and highly overlockable NB, we were able to record an impressive 18GB/sec in memory bandwidth in the synthetic SANDRA 2010 benchmark (1600MHz Memory CL7). This would have previously proved very difficult on the older CPU's but was minor on the X6.

Overall, this CPU presents even greater value for the power user than the Phenom II X4 did. Not only is it faster, it runs cooler, has Turbo Core technology, is highly overlockable and has an incredible price. There isn't much more a CPU can be for the price and we couldn't have asked for much more. If there was ever a time to truly go the AMD route for power users and overclockers, this would be it, as AMD has managed to produce their best work since the advent of the Athlon64. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

Specs

Core: 45nm Thuban (x6)
Frequency: 3200MHz
Cache: 9MB Total (6MB L3)
Platform: AM2+/AM3

Benchmarks

Cinbench 11.5: 5.67
3DMark Vantage CPU: 16615
Wprime 1024M: 255.981
Wprime 32M: 8.081

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + 6 cores
- + Turbo Core
- + Price

>Minus

- Low NB Speed
- 6MB L3

>Bottom Line

The 1090T is the best performing and most exciting thing to happen to the AM3 platform since its advent.

08

out of ten

Genius
Live with Ideas



Navigator G500
Gaming Grade/1600 DPI



NetScroll G500 Laser
DPI Adjustment/2000dpi



HS-G500V
Vibration



HS-04V
Vibration



HS-03U
Vibration/USB



HS-04U
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GIGABYTE GA-X58A-UD9

THE COMPETITION BETWEEN MOTHERBOARD

Manufacturers of late has been nothing short of startling. Seemingly spurred by the smaller manufacturers, tier-one manufacturers like GIGABYTE and their chief competitor, ASUS, have been producing motherboards at an alarming rate and, while hard to imagine, GIGABYTE has had more than ten different X58-based motherboards within the past two years.

While these have been great, and with each new model they have made some great strides in establishing themselves as makers of some of the best motherboards we have ever known, with the X58A-UD9, GIGABYTE has outdone itself. As complete as we believed the UD7 motherboard was, next to the UD9 we have to re-evaluate our opinion on the X58A-UD7. This is because as great as it remains, the UD9 is a purer motherboard.

It is a purpose-built motherboard for the extreme – and we do mean extreme – user and dare we say catered specifically and only for the overclocker. This motherboard looks, behaves and is featured in a way that only overclockers could truly appreciate. While GIGABYTE always makes a valiant attempt to win over potential customers in the gaming community with various features, some more useful than others, this time with the UD9 they have spared no expense in creating the ultimate motherboard for the X58 platform.

We have always refrained from making direct comparisons with the legendary EVGA Classified motherboard before. The GIGABYTE X58A-UD9 is clearly gunning for that board, its users and anything else any other manufacturer dares to throw at it.

Unapologetic in its appearance and intimidating size, the motherboard is bold and makes it clear that this is a record-

breaking board from start to finish. With the UD9 you are not sold dual Gigabit Ethernet, some Dolby Digital capable audio controller, USB3.0, SATA 6Gbps, Dual BIOS, or anything like that. While all these features are there, this motherboard is for quad SLI when using NVIDIA's GTX400 series cards. It's made with the Intel Core i7 980X in mind and extreme performance as its main selling point.

It's meant to be on what we call a bench desk rather than inside a computer playing *Modern Warfare 2*. This is a motherboard for attacking the ORB, local overclocking events, international competitions and HWBOT if you want to. It has a True 24-phase Power (dual 12-phase) delivery, dual 12V CPU connectors, two NVIDIA NVF200 chips, Ultra Durable 3, Dual Bios, and such. This motherboard is the ultimate in an overclocker's arsenal. If you can't overclock the CPU using this motherboard, then either the CPU or you are not up to the task. It's not going to be the motherboard that holds you back, as this is the most refined product to ever come from GIGABYTE.

Compared to the P35-DQ6 of 2006 when GIGABYTE started to pay attention to the overclocking crowd, it seems as if this is a completely different company. In fact the GIGABYTE of then would not be able to stand next to the GIGABYTE that produced the UD9 in any capacity, shape, way or form.

It's hard to explain what makes this motherboard special without going into just how stable it can be with 12 threads operating at above 5.2GHz at -166°C or when the UNCORE or NB frequency is above the 5GHz mark as well. An Intel Core i7 980X at 5.5GHz draws more power than what the GIGABYTE X58A-UD7 could provide, and since this is the enthusiast CPU of choice, GIGABYTE had to make a matching motherboard that would handle the new

Specifications

Chipset: Intel X58 + ICH10R + NVIDIA NF200 (x2)
Memory banks: 4 x DDR3 240-pin
CPU Support: Intel Core i7 (1366)
Slots: 7 x PCI-E 16X (16x)

Benchmarks

Cinebench 11.5: 6.26
SuperPi 8M: 2 min 6.189 seconds
Everest Read: 17,875
Everest Write: 15,607
Everest Copy: 21,917
Latency: 39.9ns
3DMark Vantage CPU: 22,620

CPU, and the company has succeeded.

Somewhere between feedback received from overclockers, the legendary HiCookie, the engineering team and all in between at GIGABYTE, we are possibly looking at the greatest motherboard ever made for any platform.

The ultimate in X58 performance will be found with the X58A-UD9 and if there's a motherboard that can stand up to it, we'd like to see and try it. Until then, this is the most powerful motherboard we have tested ever. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus
 + Ultimate overclocking
 + 7 PCI-Express slots
 + 4 x GPU SLI/Crossfire

>Minus
 - Size

>Bottom Line

The most impressive X58 motherboard on the market for power users, one of the few with native 4-Way SLI support.

10
out of ten



Thermalright Spitfire VGA Cooler

NEWER GRAPHICS CARDS, DESPITE having moved to a small 40nm process, are quite hot because of the sheer density of the chips. This is particularly true for the GTX480 graphics card which can reach temperatures above 90°C under full load.

For a number reasons, not limited to extending the life of their investment, people look to aftermarket coolers, which work to varying degrees. However, Thermalright, which is a company that can claim to be the current master of cooling products, has produced the best performing GPU cooler we have ever tested.

Indeed it is huge, in fact it makes it almost impossible to run Crossfire or SLI in some machines, but those with big enough cases can get away with it, and if you can't, you should still consider the Spitfire cooler for one reason and one reason only, and that is it outperforms many liquid-based GPU cooling solutions.

The large number of heatpipes and massive surface area of the heatsink means that heat is dissipated very efficiently. In fact this cooler is so proficient at cooling a graphics card that the Spitfire lowered temperatures by 17°C on the Radeon 5870 we tested it with. After 10 minutes

Specifications

Platform: ATI Cypress + NVIDIA GF100+GTS250, Quadro FX
Weight: 550g
Heat Pipes: 6
Fan: 140mm

of FurMark at maximum possible load, the graphics card temperature hovered at around 56°C. Regardless of how you view graphics card temperatures, this is most impressive, especially since the included 140mm fan was operating at less than 900rpm for the entire duration of the test, making the cooling solution almost inaudible.

Even more impressive was the fact that this temperature was recorded with the graphics card overclocked to 1,025MHz and increased GPU voltage at 1.27V. With a higher speed 140mm or 120mm fan (clips for both included) we are confident that the temperatures can be lowered even further. While the Spitfire is specifically made for the Radeon 5870, a bolt-through kit is available for the GF100 based GPU and, given the numbers we recorded, it's quite possible that the Spitfire could bring GTX480 temperatures down to the high 60°C mark or so. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Incredible cooling ability
- + Fits both GF100 (with kit) and Cypress

>Minus

- Gigantic
- Complex mounting mechanism

>Bottom Line

The best VGA air cooler on the market by some margin, but the largest as well.

07
out of ten

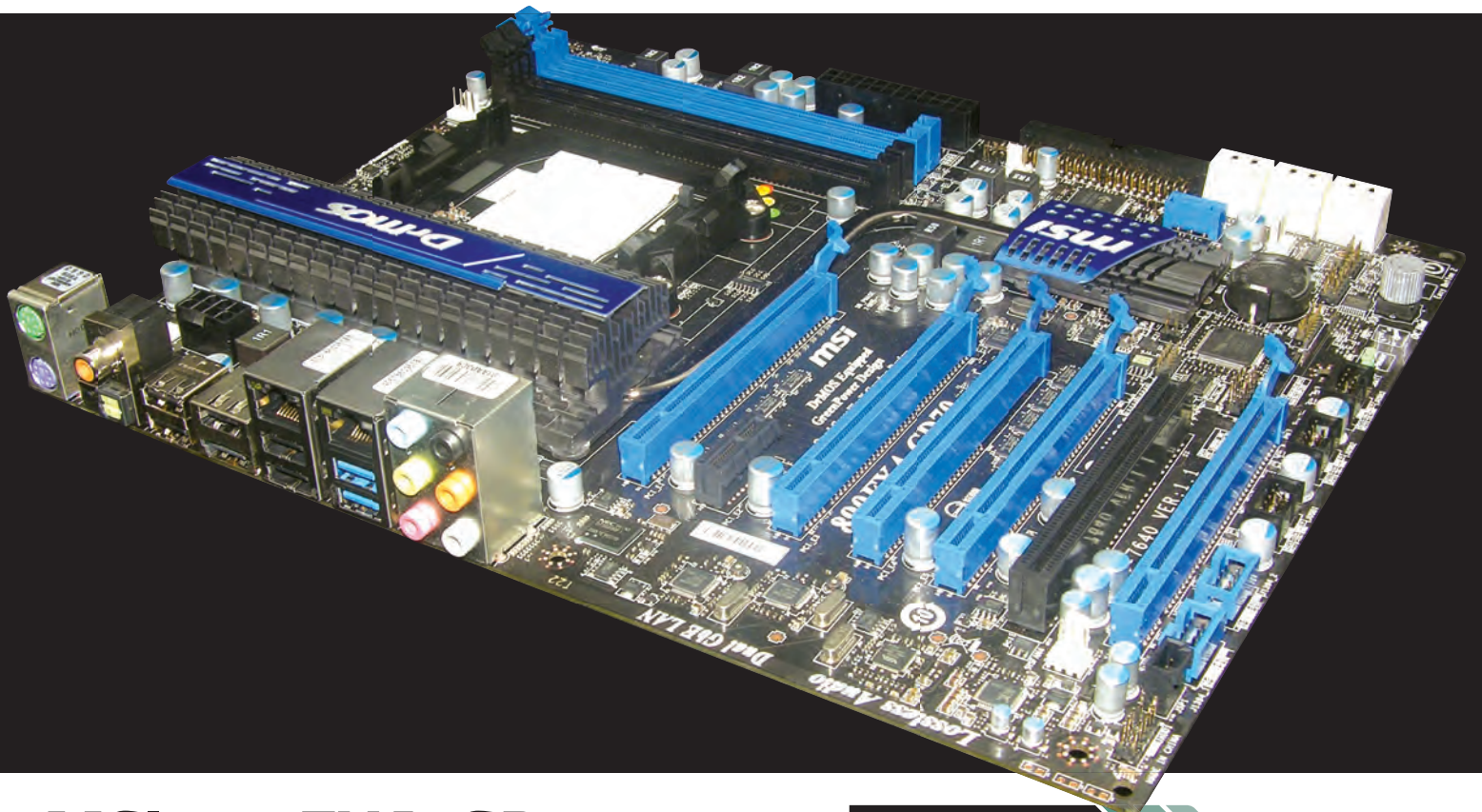
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MSI 890FXA-GD70

MSI IS THE ONE company out of the top three that we can safely say is the most improved over the past year or two. The company is really trying to reach a market they were previously not respected in, and with products such as the 890FXA-GD70, MSI makes it known that the company has actually arrived at its destination.

If it seems as though MSI is not an equal to its immediate competitors, it's likely a shortcoming in marketing and product aesthetics and not product quality. The lack of differentiation between their high-end products (in particular motherboards) and their more mainstream parts could have much to do with this perception, and an example is this motherboard as well. It is the company's premier AMD platform motherboard, but nothing on the packaging or the particularly uninspired name would make this known to you. The truth is that most hardcore gamers and/or enthusiasts would know what a ROG motherboard from ASUS is, and what having a UD5 or UD7 motherboard from GIGABYTE means. However, GD70 is still a little unknown to this market, and with a product such as the 890FXA-GD70, we believe this is under-selling what is actually a great motherboard.

In fact, between this motherboard and the X-Power X58 board, these are possibly the two best motherboards MSI has ever produced, and there is something to be said about that in the strides MSI has made over the last few years.

Given the AM3 platform and its limitations, it's impressive to see how MSI has separated the GD70 from the pack. The on-board touch sensitive buttons as always are impressive, but more so is the OC-DIAL, which allows real-time overclocking of the system without the

need for additional software. This is a great feature (not unique to this board from MSI, but a first on an 890 based board from MSI) which will be highly appreciated by overclockers, especially since it facilitates what the OC-Station from ASUS does for its boards. However, unlike the OC-Station, this is not an additional purchase but is actually on-board and very handy when paired with the POST LED (despite being in a questionable position) dedicated voltage measuring points and the voltage dip switch block.

Between all these features and a simple, but detailed BIOS menu (Cell menu in particular), MSI has built a highly impressive motherboard with the GD70 and, comparing it to other 890FX boards from the best manufacturers, the GD70 can stand side by side with that lot.

Performance is as one would expect neither outstanding or poor by any means, but predictable and largely dependent on the CPU and memory being used. We have no doubt that AMD performance records can be broken with this motherboard and it will simply be a matter of tuning the system as you would any other.

While we did not test the motherboard under any exotic cooling methods, it is worth mentioning that there are some highly impressive results we have seen online where this motherboard was used, and this proves again that the GD70 deserves a better name or at least deserves to be part of a special line of motherboard products from MSI, much like the famed Lightning range of VGA cards.

If MSI carries on in this direction then we are in for some very interesting products in the future. If we could have anything on this motherboard over and above what is already there is 4-way Crossfire support with independent graphics cards, however

Specifications

Chipset: AMD RD890+ SB850
Memory banks: 4 x DDR3 240-pin
CPU Support: AMD Ahlon II/ Phenom II
Slots: 4 x PCI-E 16X, 1 x PCI-E 1X, 1 x PCI.2

Benchmarks

Cinebench 11.5: 6.42
SuperPi 8M: 3minutes 5.270 seconds
Everest Read: 10,843
Everest Write: 9,811
Everest Copy: 13,518
Latency: 40ns
3DMark Vantage CPU: 18,510

this is not a major feature for the vast majority of people.

It's a pity that by and large 890FX boards are priced significantly higher than the 790FX boards were, but then again it is a better chipset or rather it is the chipset of choice for AMD's 6 core CPUs, which are, for the first time, providing a real alternative for Intel's low-end Core i7 low CPUs. If you want to build a high-end AMD platform it would be an oversight on your part not to consider the MSI 890FXA-GD70, as it really is a great motherboard. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Very good performance
- + Great BIOS
- + OC-DIAL

>Minus

- Low NB frequency clocking
- LED location

>Bottom Line

A worthy successor to the MSI 790FXA-GD70 and better in every way.

08
out of ten

Palit GeForce GTX470



NOW THAT NVIDIA'S GTX400 series of graphics cards has been released, manufacturers are seemingly struggling to make their products stand out from the competition. Overclocking the card and merely calling it the OC Edition is no longer enough. Consumers are no longer fooled by a mild overclock that they could perform themselves for free.

No, for a graphics cards - especially in the GTX400 range - to stand out it needs to be more than just a sticker on a reference designed PCB. Fortunately for Palit they have done more than any other manufacturer. Not only is the PCB a customised design, it is shorter than that of the reference card, features a better dual fan cooler, runs quieter, and also happens to overclock better.

Not satisfied with these differences, Palit has also fitted four outputs on the graphics card (Display Port, HDMI and Dual DVI all with HDCP capability) which is great for those who make use of multiple displays of various connection interfaces.

Usually when a manufacturer deviates from the reference design of a graphics card, the customer loses out on voltage modification features. Fortunately, this is not the case with the Palit card, and standard voltage tweaking utilities like NVIDIA Inspector and MSI's Afterburner work just fine, making it an overclocker's dream as well.

In just about every way this is as

Specifications

Core: 608MHz GF100 (40nm)
Processors: 440
Render Outputs: 32
Memory: 1,280MB GDDR5 (3,348MHz)
 133.9GB/sec
API: DirectX11/OpenGL3.x, OpenCL 1.0, CUDA, PhysX

Benchmarks

Heaven Benchmark 2.1: 1069
3DMark Vantage: P14,925
3DMark06: 21,498
Crysis Warhead 1,920 x 1,080: 63.17
Resident Evil 5 1,920 x 1,080 4xAA: 98.3fps



perfect a GTX470 as you are likely to get on the market. If the reference card was designed to the same level and quality as the Palit product, the GTX470 would be even greater.

As it stands, this is the best GTX470 you can currently get your hands on, and if you are able to, two of these in SLI provide incredible performance that surpasses that of any HD5970 available on the market. We can't recall when last this happened or if it ever has before, but Palit is showing up the other manufacturers. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Very fast
- + Cool
- + Overclocking

>Minus

- Nothing

>Bottom Line

The best GTX470 money can buy and the only one worth actually buying given it's pricing.

09
out of ten

Freecom Network Drive XS 1TB

SO, YOUR COLLECTION OF media, miscellaneous data and wildly varied assortment of movies has suddenly grown tenfold because you're at a LAN and some clown with a million terabyte drives decides to share everything he's ever accumulated on his travels through the Internet and to LANs across the country. You decide you must have at least a piece of that action so you start grabbing everything you can, and within about thirty seconds, your measly little 320GB drive is full and you're left with no drive space to install that brand-spanking new copy of *Modern Warfare 2* you just bought. You sob to yourself a little, set fire to the guy sitting next to you in frustration and somebody hands you a Freecom Network Drive XS to calm you down: which is good, because it's a great portable network drive.

Encased in rubber (which reduces vibration), the Network Drive XS is small enough that carting it around with you shouldn't be a problem. It's externally powered though, so you'll need a power socket available if you plan on using it. The model we reviewed boasts 1TB of storage space, but sizes ranging from 500GB to 2TB are on offer. Everything you need to get started is in the box, including USB and Ethernet cables. You'll also find a disc containing the



software that'll help (sort of - it can be a bit iffy and problematic at times) get your Freecom drive connected to your network, instantly providing extra storage space for everyone on the network. The software also lets you set up the drive as an FTP server, add/remove user accounts, manage media server folders, configure IPs and the like and even queue up torrent files to be downloaded directly to the drive. Basically, you can use the drive as you see fit, and it works great. The built-in Gigabit LAN connection is awesome and makes network transfers incredibly quick. Freecom's Network Drive XS is definitely worth considering if you're looking for portable storage or some extra storage space on your network. **NAG**

Dane Remendes

Specifications

Capacity: 500GB | 1TB | 1.5TB | 2TB
Connectivity: USB 2.0 | Gigabit LAN

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Gigabit LAN connection
- + Portable
- + Multifunctional

>Minus

- Slightly dodgy software

>Bottom Line

Acting as both network storage and a portable drive, this is definitely worth looking at if you're searching for either.

07
out of ten

A.C. Ryan Playon!HD



MEDIA PLAYERS ARE a dime a dozen these days, so it takes a bit to impress us when we get a new one in for review here at NAG. At a bare minimum, it needs to play all common media formats we throw at it; it needs to output to HD and SD television sets; and has to be easy to use.

By those standards, the awkwardly-punctuated Playon!HD from little-known Dutch company A.C. Ryan is certainly worthy of our consideration.

The unit we tested didn't come with a hard drive, so we had to provide our own, but the lack of an included drive also keeps the price down. And it's not like you even need the hard drive. The Playon!HD can read media from USB hard drives and flash drives, SD cards, NAS devices, your PC and the Internet. It even supports external DVD drives, though it will only read data discs and won't play actual DVDs because of region restrictions.

The unit has excellent format and codec support, so it will play just about anything you throw at it. Check the specs box for specifics.

That's what goes in. What comes out is equally impressive: composite, component and HDMI up to 1080p, as well as digital audio. The unit also comes bundled with all three video cables, a USB cable and a remote.

The interface is simple and easy to use. The file browser lets you search any of the possible inputs for media, and when hovering over a file, a small preview will appear on the right - a nice touch which

Specifications

A/V Out: HDMI (up to 1080p); Composite video/audio; Y/Pb/Pr Video; SPDIF coaxial (digital audio); SPDIF Optical TOSLink (digital audio)

Inputs: Internal 3.5" SATA/SATA2 HDD (up to 2TB); External USB HDD or flash drive; Media cards (SD, SDHC, MMC, MS, MSPro); Network (wired, wireless optional)

Video Formats: AVI; MKV; TS; TP; TRP; M2TS; MPG; MP4; MOV; M4V; VOB; ISO; IFO; DAT; WMV; ASF; RM; RMVB; FLV resolution up to 720p; 1080i; 1080p; DV-ISO

Video Codecs: MPEG-1; MPEG-2; MPEG-4 SP/ASP/AVC (H.264); XviD; DivX; WMV9 (VC-1); RealVideo 8/9/10 (up to 720P)

Audio Formats: MP3; MP2; WMA; AAC; FLAC; WAV; OGG Vorbis; PCM; LPCM; MS-ADPCM; LC-AAC; HE-AAC; COOK; RA-Lossless

Image Formats: JPEG; BMP; GIF; TIF; PNG

makes it easier to identify exactly what you're looking at. When playing movies, even in HD, the fastforward and rewind functions work flawlessly.

If you've connected the Playon!HD to the Internet, you can also listen Internet radio stations or use the built-in BitTorrent client to download more media.

All told, the Playon!HD is one of the most competent, complete network media players we've ever tested. **NAG**

Chris Bistline



THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Lots of input methods
- + 1080p output
- + Excellent format support

>Minus

- Large
- Lacklustre styling

>Bottom Line

It's not the prettiest media player on Earth, but it is one of the best we've ever tried.

08
out of ten

Thermaltake Element S VK60001W2Z

THERMALTAKE HAS A WELL-ESTABLISHED reputation as a manufacturer of high-end, high-quality but financially-accessible computer components, and the Element S VK6000 looks like its set to continue that trend. From your first glance of this case, it's clear that this is one piece of hardware that's built to last. Every part of the case is sturdy, but not overly heavy, and even the plastic bits (which comprise a large amount of the exterior) feel tough enough to stand up to a fair bit of LANning.

The case's four fans make sure that all of your valuable components stay cool, and thanks to the larger fans' low RPM, don't generate too much noise. All corners and edges inside the case are well-machined, which makes it a pleasure to work inside, but the interior is a bit too cramped for my liking, especially in the PSU cable-management bay. Thankfully, that can be removed altogether, and while it does perform its job well, isn't necessary if it's just going to be a bother. Moving slightly up front, the plentiful HDD bays are the same matt black and make use of a simple tool-less design for quick installation or removal of the hard drives. Sadly, the optical drive bays above are without this feature. Once again, things get a bit cramped in this department, as the hard drives should

ideally be installed with the cables facing the right side of the case; otherwise, replacing the side panel can be a bit tricky with the SATA and power cables getting in the way.

All of the fans in the case are built into the cable-management system that runs along the side of the fixed motherboard tray. While that's great for keeping things tidy, the rear fan's cable isn't long enough to make it all the way through, so it gets stuck halfway down the conduit where it has been cable-tied in place. Sorting out this problem requires that you open the right-hand side panel, which gave us some trouble with one of our review units. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows



THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Well-built and sturdy
- + Looks great
- + Quiet fans

>Minus

- Cable management needs work
- Pointless front door

>Bottom Line

A good-looking, sturdy case that is adversely affected by a few design quirks

The side-panel fan uses a partially cable-less system to connect to the PSU through electronic contact pads that connect when the panel is closed

Specifications

Fans: 1x 120mm, 1x 140mm, 2x 230mm
Drive bays: 3x 5.25", 7x 3.5", 2x 2.5"
I/O ports: 2x USB 2.0, 1x e-SATA, Audio
Weight: 8.74kg
Dimensions: 505x230x540mm

07
out of ten

Toshiba STORE.E TV 500GB

I F YOU'RE LOOKING FOR a quick, simple way to watch videos on your TV, without the need to hook up an Xbox or PS3, then media players like this are the perfect solution. Such devices tend to range from the most basic – a hard drive with media output – to the most advanced, which include NAS functionality, full HD playback, Wi-Fi connectivity or anything else you think you'd need. Toshiba's STORE.E TV falls on the lower end of that spectrum, but attempts to make up for its lack of functionality with a slick physical presentation and ease-of-use.

Setting up the device is straightforward. There are no discs to bother with; plug in the required power adaptor, connect the USB cable and copy across your media. Viewing couldn't be any simpler, either. You'll have to connect both the component and composite cables if you require HD, as the audio is only available through the composite cables, but other than that little quirk you'll be up and running in minutes. Only a few settings are available from the menu screen, such as resolution and audio source (HDMI or stereo), but for a device as simple as this, anything more advanced would be a waste.

In terms of performance, the STORE.E TV behaves as you'd expect. Transfer speeds to the hard drive through USB 2.0 hovered between 20-30MB/s, but managed to climb above 30MB/s on a few occasions. Playback is smooth, even when rewinding or fast-forwarding, but there were a few delays while navigating the menu

Specifications

Storage capacity: 500GB
Connectivity: USB 2.0 with host
Output: Composite, component, HDMI
Supported media: MPEG 1/2/4, AVI (DivX), DAT, VOB, ISO, MP3, WMA, WAV, JPEG

and waiting for videos to load, although they weren't long enough to irritate. There's even a handy preview window for videos, which takes a few seconds to load but could save you a bit of time when browsing through a series or the like. The only real gripe I have with the STORE.E TV is its lack of full HD (it's limited to 720p/1080i) and the lack of an HDMI cable in the package. Otherwise, this is the perfect device for getting started with your home media setup, and is small and portable enough to be brought with on holiday. **NAG**

Geoff Burrows

THE SCORE

>Plus

- + Looks good
- + Silent
- + Performs well

>Minus

- No full HD
- Incomplete package

>Bottom Line

It might fall short of similar devices, but the STORE.E TV offers everything you need in a basic media player.

07

out of ten



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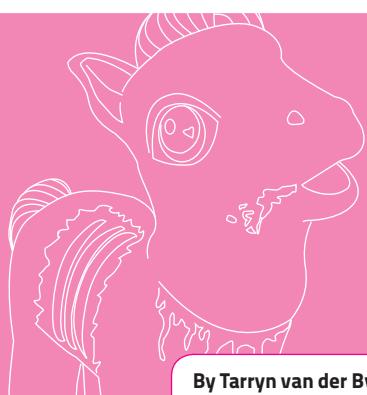
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GG

By Tarryn van der Byl

For the win

I'VE MAINTAINED FOR YEARS that *Counter-Strike*¹ players are soulless husks of humanity, and Mr Julien Barreaux, 20, of somewhere in France, has recently vindicated my very scientific theory. After being knifed in a match sometime last November, this guy spent seven months plotting furious vengeance. And no, that wasn't anything obvious like, you know, chumming the servers for a reciprocating frag on the offender, but actually proper-stabbing him in real life – which he duly did*. QED, as I like saying when I want to make a point only clever people will understand.

Now, before I get a bunch of carefully outraged emails from the two *Counter-Strike* players who haven't hunted down and murdered their rivals, don't bother. I know you're only biding your time.

Meanwhile, what's with people who can't take losing in a video game? Sure, not everybody's smashing their stuff into a wall and stalking out the house with mom's cutlery and a hit list, but anyone who's spent any amount of time gaming online has likely encountered more than one player whose losing response is the exact opposite of well mannered. It's usually the same retard who spent the entire game spawn camping out of a level glitch, and loudly complaining that every other point scored was due to imbalanced weapons and/or lag and/or some nefarious homosexual agenda.

I'll also take this convenient opportunity to slag off organised competitive gaming, because more often than not, that misbehaving maladroitness has clan tags. I mean, for the most part, it's a dedicated culture of atavistic, chest-beating stupidity that's completely divorced from reality. Where else

would a person who can click on stuff quickly even matter? Memo to that lot: games are supposed to be fun, and you're ruining it for everyone else. If you're so committed to real life consequences, join the army and get on the business end of evolution. Like hand grenades.

You know what everybody thinks when they hear some dweeb howling with violent indignation in a post-game lobby? They think, "Shame, there's a guy with a really small penis. Poor really small penis guy. =(" And if you didn't think that before, you're totally going to think that from now on. So to all those sore losers out there, we all know. **NAG**

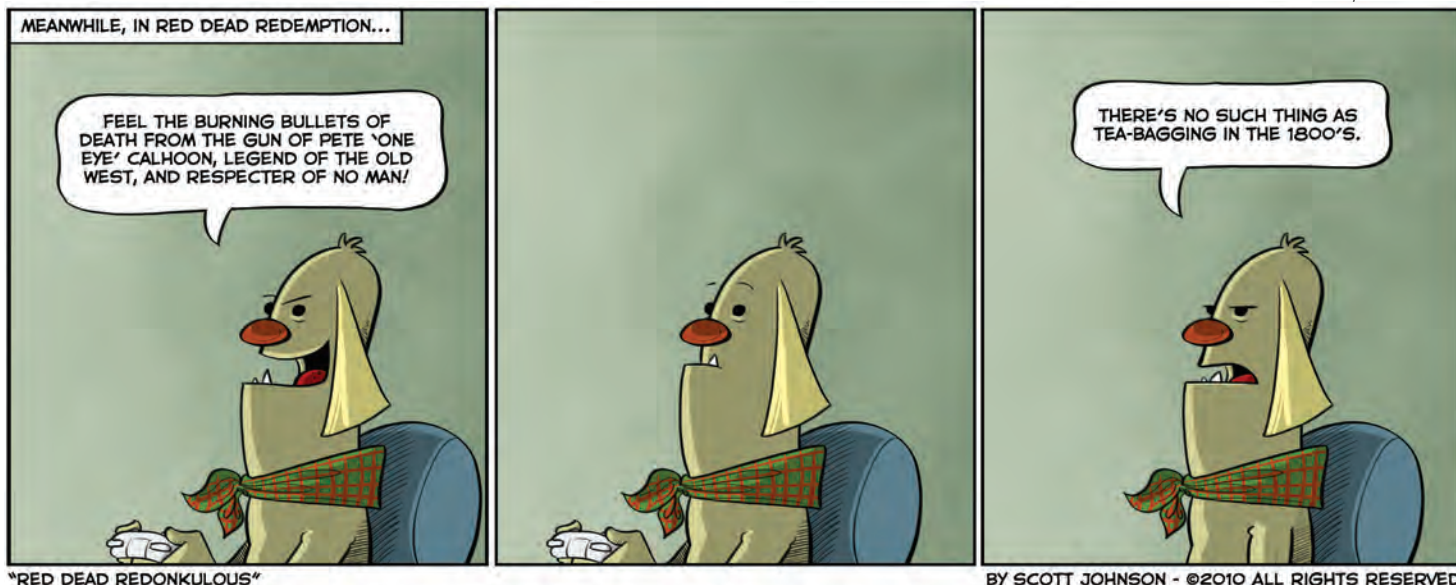
¹ Considering I'm supposed to actually read and 'edit' these columns and then improve them and then guide the writers in the right direction for future columns, I feel that a public dressing down is in order here. How many times do I have to tell you that this is a gaming magazine? 1. *Counter-Strike* has nothing to do with gaming. 2. People haven't played that 'game' in years. 3. Those that did play it (especially competitively) suffer from what psychosurgeons call a *Counter-Lobotomy* and are incapable of playing anything else and/or enjoying life and being normal. Now please, for the last time – stay on target and write about games in this gaming magazine. Ed.

* And failed, as it happens. Barreaux missed his intended victim's heart by an inch or so, presumably because <record scratch!> there's no such thing as aimbots in real life. COUNTER-TERRORISTS LOSE.



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